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OR,

The Maine Log-Driver in New York.

BY JO PIERCE,
AUTHOR OF "BOB O' THE BOWERY," "DENNIS DUFF," "TOM THISTLE," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

A DEAD MAN IS FOUND.

"SAY, boy, I'll give you a dollar to get me a brick!"

"What do you want of a brick?"

"Want it ter smash in that door, an', by gosh! I'm goin' ter do it. Down goes that door,

"THE THIEVES ARE PULLIN' ME DOWN!" HOWLED THE LOG-DRIVER.
"HANG ON, BILLY; HANG ON!"

Bowery Billy, the Bunco Bouncer.

an' ef I can't hev a brick I'll take something else, but down goes the door, somehow!"

A boy of about seventeen years had been pursuing his way through Prince street, New York, when he came upon an excited man who was trying to force open an obstacle to which his words referred, but trying without the least evidence of success. To his last assertion the boy gravely replied:

"I wouldn't do it, ef I was you. There's a law against sech a smash-up, an' you would—"

"I don't care a rap fer the law! Why should I, when others don't care? Down goes the door!"

"Why, mister? What's the matter, anyway?"

"A feller has just gone in there who has robbed me."

The boy smiled. He was one born and bred to New York life, and would have been blind not to see that his present companion was fresh from other scenes, having the unmistakable characteristics which mark the genuine countryman.

"How did he rob you?"

"On the train from New Haven here."

"Oh! a soaker, was he?"

The explanation was not just what had been expected, and Billy Wade, as the youth was named, amended his original opinion.

"If you've been robbed," he added, "your proper way is ter see the perleece, an' they will—"

"Darn the perleece! I wouldn't give a chaw of terbacco fer the whole force you've got here! I'm able to do this job, myself, an' I'm goin' ter do it. Yes, by gosh! The feller who robbed me is in there, an' I'll hev him ef I smash in the door ter do it!" cried the countryman.

"Don't be too rapid, mister," advised Billy.

"He went in there—Harry Hudson, he calls hisself—an' I'm bound ter foller. Ef I get inter trouble there will be mournin' in Skowhegan, Maine, an' the boys will drive logs without Phineas P. Pratt—that's me!"

"If you've been robbed the best way is ter rely on the perleece, mister, but ef you're dead set ag'in it, why, I s'pose I kin give ye a bit o' help, myself."

"How?"

"This place you're a hammerin' at is only a side-door, anyhow. The main entrance is jest beyond, an' you kin see Harry Hudson by goin' in there, I dassay. Skip Meegan keeps the ranch, an' it is a sort of hotel. Will you go in?"

"Will I? You bet, an' I'll raise merry thunder—"

"Now, hold on, Phineas P. Pratt. No high jinks won't go here. It ain't a Sunday-school in yender, an' ef you go fer ter kick up a row the boss will trundle you out on yer ear. See?"

"I'll hev my money or bu'st the whole shanty!"

"The only way ter do it is ter use common sense. Ef you go in an act voylent you'll git flung out. Your plan is ter go in mild an' meek an' ask where Harry's room is. I've seen him before, an' I reckon the handle o' Hudson don't belong ter him, but he is called Happy Harry, an' by that cognomen you must ask fer him. Now, don't be brash an' spoil yer own case."

Billy Wade spoke persuasively, and Mr. Pratt saw fit to be convinced. Curbing his hot temper he answered:

"If you're a New Yorker I s'pose you ought ter know the way things is done here, an' it shall be as you say. Come with me!"

"One word, first. You say Happy Harry robbed you?"

"He did."

"How?"

"Got inter conversation with me on the train, set beside me, an' jest everlastin' stole my wallet."

"How do you know?"

"Twas in the pocket next ter him, an' nobody else could 'a' done it, by gosh!"

"I'm afraid your evidence ain't o' the best, but this is your case an' not mine—at present," Billy thoughtfully added. "You kin try it, sence you're bound ter."

"Come on!"

Considerable time had elapsed, and Pratt was justified in being in a hurry. He trod eagerly at Billy's heels as the latter entered the other door, and then followed him up the stairs.

The hour was early evening, and the guide expected to find something of a crowd in the office of the so-called hotel. He mentioned this fact to Phineas, and it was arranged that he should do all the talking. Thus, when they reached the clerk's desk, the boy carelessly asked:

"Kin you oblige me with the number o' Happy Harry's room? We want ter see the gent."

"Number 27," replied the clerk, with scarcely a glance.

"Thank ye, boss."

They turned away and went along the hall. Billy had never been there before, but it was not hard to find the designated number. Along the hall they went, while the figures on the doors constantly increased in magnitude, and finally 27 appeared before them.

The guide knocked. He thought he heard a voice say, "Come in," and, though subsequent events proved this to be a mistake, he did enter.

"Don't be too cranky," he warned, to his companion, as they passed the threshold.

They were in the room, but they looked around in vain for its tenant. No one was in sight.

"Is he out?"

"May be in the closet," suggested Billy. "I'll look."

Phineas was even more hasty in his movements, and he led the way. He passed the line of the bed, which stood well out from the wall. Then he suddenly recoiled and nearly knocked Billy down.

"Gosh to thunder!" he ejaculated.

"What is it? You act as if—"

Speech died away on Billy's lips. He had seen something which checked the power of utterance and left him weak and startled. There was that on the floor which would have dazed the stoutest beholder—the body of a man; no more.

He lay on his back with his face turned upward, and it was the thought of each that a look of terror was frozen on his still features. Except for that there was nothing visible that told of violent things, but a startling idea was in their minds.

"Dead!" gasped Billy, after a pause.

"It's Harry Hudson, too," muttered Phineas.

"Happy Harry it is, an' he's done his last robbin'. Say, how did this happen? Was it—was it murder?"

Phineas started back. His face had grown white, and he was about as much frightened as any man could be.

"This wa'n't no natural death," he asserted, tremulously.

"Then somebody was layin' fer him when he come in, an' he got in his work quick."

"Murder it was."

"We must go down ter the office an' report it—"

"Not much; I'll get out o' this house on the run. What, stay here an' let them say I killed him? Wal, not much, you bet! I'm goin' ter skip immediate. What would our word go fer ag'in all the evidence they would bring ter bear on the other side? Come on!"

He seized Billy by the collar and began to drag him away.

"Stop! Ef we run away they will think—"

"Darn me ef I care what they think under

that condition. I know what they'll think ef we stay an' let them find us here. I'm goin', an' so be you. You can't stay here unless I do, an' I won't! Come on!"

Phineas was big and strong, and he carried his way not only by muscle, but because Billy was almost as much disturbed as he. The result of it all was that they hurried out of the hotel. By making for the side door they avoided the main room, and did not again make themselves visible in the office.

Nothing more was said until they were nearly a block away. Then the man from Maine reopened the conversation.

"Say, I want you ter come ter my room."

"Where is it?" Billy asked.

"On King street. Join me there an' we'll talk this over."

Phineas's object was to keep possession of his companion until he was sure the latter would not go and tell of the late adventure, but he need not have been so anxious. Billy had become interested in the case, and would not willingly have parted from Phineas.

To King street they went, and when once there the man drew a deep sigh and sunk into his chair.

"I'm jest knocked endways!" he declared.

"You may be worse, later on. Do you know that I think we have made a serious mistake?"

"How?"

"In leaving the hotel."

"Why should that be?"

"If Happy Harry was murdered we shall be accused of the crime."

"They've got ter ketch us first."

"An easy thing fer the city perleece."

"I ain't afraid o' the whole b'ilin' o' them, by gosh!"

"That is cheap talk. Let's be sensible, ef we kin. Harry is dead up in his room. We think he was killed, though the fact is we run off like mad without waitin' ter find out. He probly was murdered, fer he was in good health, ter all appearances, jest afore he shuffled off the mortal coil. Well, we was seen ter enter the office, ask fer him, an' then go up ter his room jest afore he died. As sure as guns we shall be suspected!"

Phineas looked more serious.

"Mebbe you're right."

"I am."

"We might go back—"

"Too late! We must stand by the line of operations we hev marked out. No goin' back, now."

"This is a bad go. I didn't think I was goin' to git inter any such mean fix when I left Skowhegan."

"Why did you come here, Mr. Pratt?"

"To git a fortune I hev inherited."

"Uncle o' yours?"

"Yes; 'way back. You see, it was money in England, and I heired it from a sure source."

"So your folks ain't been long in this country?"

"Ain't they, though? Well, you bet they have. Been here about as long as any white man has. Aminadab Pratt was the first; then Joshua; then Josiah, Peleg, Caleb, Moses, Aaron and Thomas. Thomas was my father, and I'm the ninth generation in the country."

"You have it down fine."

"Yes; I had it looked up."

"How was that?"

"Wal, you see, my cousin Harriet read that there was money in England due ter folks named Pratt, ef they could be found, an' no heirs over there. I looked inter it, an' when I had proved my line in this country I was told I was an heir direct."

"Who told ye?"

"Lawyer here in New York."

"Who?"

"Dulaney & Jones Brothers is the firm. I hev my dealin's with Mr. Dulaney, who is a fine feller."

"Hey you got your money?"

"Not yet, but it's all ready fer me, an' I'm ter meet Dulaney ter-night, ye see."

"Where is his office?"

"I don't know, but his box number is on this sheet o' paper. All my letters hev been writ ter the box in the post-office, ye see."

"How can ye meet him ef you don't know where his office is?"

"I go ter his house."

"Where is that?"

"On Houston street."

"Cost ye much?" asked Billy, curiously.

"One hund'ud dollars, so fer, an' five hund'ud more when I git the cash. That's all I pay fer ten thousand dollars."

Billy shook his head.

"Phineas, it's my opinion you're bein' taken in!" he declared.

CHAPTER II.

TROUBLE ON THE STREET.

THE man from Maine looked very much surprised.

"Why do ye think I'm bein' taken in?" he demanded.

"I ain't got any faith in this money business."

"Why, it's as plain as the nose on your face. See all these dockymen. Look at that, first."

He extended a printed circular which proved to be a notice to the effect that one Belcher Pratt had died in England; that he was the last of his line for many generations, and that, since there were no lineal heirs either in England or elsewhere, the immense fortune he had left would fall to collateral relatives if they could be found. It was supposed they were in America, being the descendants of some early emigrant. Such heirs were advertised for, and the fortune would become theirs on proof of identity.

Billy looked up.

"You're one o' them, be you?" he asked.

"I be," admitted Phineas, with much satisfaction.

"How did you learn it?"

"Looked up my geneawlogy in this country from the start, and then wrote the lawyers. They said right off that I was one o' them."

"An' you are to get ten thousand dollars by payin' them five hundred, be ye?"

"Yes."

"This circular says the fortune is 'imense.'"

"Wal, there is so many heirs that my part is only ten thousand."

"Ef there is so many heirs, ain't it a bit steep fer you ter pay five hundred fer your share o' the expense?"

"It seems so at first, but it ain't. Ye see, in order ter haul in ther cash we had ter employ English counsel ter help the New York lawyers, an' they charged high. Of course Dulaney & Jones Brothers did all the business, an' they thought at one time it would be a fizzle, but they was sharp enough fer the case. They hired Queen Victoria's own lawyer, an' he so worked on the old lady that she said she guessed it was all right, an' consented to let the money leave the country."

"Who says so?"

"Dulaney & Jones Brothers."

"Phineas, you are being taken in the very worst way. This is all gammon, and you're dealin' with New York bunco sharps, I'll bet my off stockin'. Yes, b'jinks! that is jest it!"

"Go 'way!" exclaimed Phineas incredulously.

"Did you ever hear of anybody who ever succeeded in gettin' money from England, ef their folks had been in America long?"

"I never heard of anybody who tried."

"I hev, but they never see the color o' the bullion, b'jinks! Ye see, ef you've been long here there ain't no show fer sech fortunes. Many try, pay out their own hard cash, and then git nothin' back. Why, et was but a

few months ago I heard o' the arrest o' two sharps here in New York who was playin' the game on the unwary. Phin, it's a reg'lar bunco scheme."

"Pshaw!"

"I tell ye et is. I'm on ter all the games of the bunco brethren. I make et my business fer ter keep watch o' them an' head off their plots. Why, I've done so much of it that the perlece all know me, an' I go under the nickname o' the Bunco Bouncer. Understand me, I ain't a buncoer, myself, but I got et by beatin' the buncoers out time an' ag'in. My favorite field fer operations is the Bowery. Hi! Phin, many's the bunco sharp I've bounced from the Bowery!"

Billy warmed to his subject and was almost hilarious, but simple Mr. Pratt looked puzzled.

"I see you mean 'there is swindlin' goin' on, but what in thunder is a bunco man, anyhow?'"

"He is a sharp who lays fer countrymen an' does them up."

"Say, do ye think because I come from Skowhegan, Maine, that I ain't up ter snuff?"

"I think you're so fer up that you're liable ter be snuffed out, ef you don't mind yer eye."

"Pshaw!"

"You're ter give up yer five hundred dollars hard cash fer ten thousand, in a private house, be ye?" asked Billy.

"Yes."

"My good frien', you would git only counterfeit money or sawdust."

"Pshaw! You're too suspicious. I guess a good firm o' lawyers is ter be trusted."

"I'll bet my best left stockin' there ain't no sech names in the Directory as Dulaney & Jones Brothers, lawyers."

"We'll see."

"Le's go out immediate."

"No, no; I ain't anxious ter go out an' git arrested fer killin' Harry Hudson."

"Is that still runnin' in your mind?"

"Is it runnin'? Why, it's gallopin' faster than any hoss that ever showed up at a fair in Somerset county, Maine. I know we shall get hauled up fer what we didn't do, an' the Pike family in Skowhegan will jest fat an inch on every rib. Ye see, I give Dolly Pike the mitten, an' they hev all been sour on me sence."

"It's a bad business about Happy Harry."

"So it is, an' I don't forget that he still had the cash he stole from me. Gosh! but I'd like ter know what sort of a place New York is, anyhow!"

"Et is full o' bunco men, thieves an' sharps, an' only the onceasing vigilance o' me an' the perlece keeps it on decent footin'."

There was a knock at the door.

"Gosh ter mighty!"

Phineas gave one wild leap as he uttered the exclamation and then sprung for the bed. Under it he tried to go, but it was not so high posted as the beds of Skowhegan, and he stuck fast. There he remained, kicking wildly in his efforts to go further, and presenting such a comical sight that Bunco Billy was forced to laugh heartily.

Unfortunately, too, the applicant at the door, who was the innocent landlady, decided that no one was in, and she opened the door and caught Phineas in his great kicking act.

She stared in wonder.

"I won't be took!" cried Mr. Pratt, from his refuge.

"Dear me, I hope he is not ill!" exclaimed the good lady, solicitously, still eying Phineas.

"Nothing serious, mum," replied Billy. "He had an electric fit, and it was worse than a Bowery tailor's fit; but he's comin' out on it at a canter."

"I have a letter for him."

"Lay it on the table, an' he will come ter

time an' peruse it directly. He's dead in love with public dockymen."

"Can't I help him?"

"I'm all right," murmured Mr. Pratt, from under the bed, and he then made a struggle and managed to get out.

The landlady departed with an unsatisfied and sympathetic expression on her face, after which Phineas made a dive for the letter.

"From my lawyers," he quickly said.

"Yes, so it is. Read it, Billy. It postpones our meeting about the money."

Such was the purport of the letter, for it stated that the writer would be occupied with another client on an important case until so laet an hour that he would have to defer seeing Mr. Pratt until the following evening.

"Jest as wal, I guess," observed Phineas, "for ef we went out we should prob'ly be arrested fer murderin' Harry Hudson. Good! I'll stick ter my room."

"Phin, you're goin' out with me."

"I be?"

"Yes."

"Not ef General Jackson knows hisself."

"I want ye ter go, jest the same. Don't think every stick an' stone is goin' ter pop up an accuse ye of doin' the killin'. The more I think of it, the more I reckon Happy Harry may hev died o' heart disease or colic."

"D'y'e really think so?" inquired Phineas, eagerly.

"Yes."

"I'm glad there's a ray o' hope, but why should we go out?"

"Ter see ef we kin git any word about this Mister Rollo Dulaney, whose name is signed to this letter."

"Say, boy, don't you worry about him; he's all right, an' don't ye forget it."

It was impossible to shake the Maine man in this opinion, but Bowery Li'lly accomplished his object under disguise. Phineas P. Pratt was eager to see the sights of New York, and, when Billy had again assured him it would not bring arrest upon them on account of Happy Harry's death, he consented to go. When he agreed he fell into a trap. Billy had not lost his ruling purpose, and he intended to manage matters so that they would get the news desired, in spite of objections. As the sworn foe of bunco men he must be up and doing before the latter could get down to their work.

The ill-assorted pair left the house together.

It was a curious combination. Phineas was big, fat, and forty years old. Billy was small, lithe and but seventeen. Phineas had a broad, smooth red face where the imprint of the country was seen in every feature, almost. Billy was keen-eyed, sharp-faced and alert—a genuine product of the great city.

It was the agreement that Billy should show his companion the Bowery. The nearest way there was through Houston or Prince street. But Phineas had such a horror of the neighborhood, since Happy Harry's end, that he would not hear to it, and they took a walk as far as Bleeker and started to cross through there instead.

"I should dote on this trip ef it wasn't fer Hudson," remarked the elder of the twain.

"I've always wanted to see the Bowery, fer though I calculate I am as smart a log-driver as ever stood in the Maine woods, this is new ter me."

"Great place, as you will see. So are the woods, I s'pose."

"Now you're shoutin'! My trade is lumberman an' log-driver, an' ef you ever want fun, come down an' see us fellers break up a jam."

"That's where logs clog up in a river when bein' floated down, ain't it?"

"Say, how did ye learn that?" and Phineas was surprised.

"Seems ter me I've heerd of it."

"Mebbe. Say, there goes a fire-engine, ringin' the bell like mad. Le's take in the blaze—"

"That engine is an ambulance."

"Gosh! you don't say so? Wal, I don't know all about New York, I admit, but I'm willin' ter learn. This ain't a very spruce street—Hello! there's a fight!"

There was one, and Phineas had to stop and see the end of it. Then they went on, but had gone but a short distance when there was a new diversion. It passed unheeded in its earlier stage by the man from Maine, but there were features about it which made an immediate impression on Bunco Billy.

On the south side of the street was a tall building which appeared to the casual view to be one devoted to business purposes. In front of this a cab was standing, with the driver on the box. From the building emerged two persons, a young lady and a man. She was silent and grave; he was smiling, respectfully attentive and easy.

It was the purpose of one or both to take the vehicle, and he was escorting her to that conveyance. They reached its side and she was about to enter when a slight, girlish figure rushed out of the house and appeared by their side.

A clear, sharp voice came from the last corner as she addressed the young lady.

"Don't you get in there!" she cried. "If you do you will regret it as long as you live!"

The young lady stopped short and regarded the alarm-giver wonderingly.

"What did you say?" she inquired.

"Ef you get inter that cab you'll make a huge mistake."

"See here, Patty Beeks," cried the man, "you skip about your business before I sit down on you!"

"Not for you, Steve Slim!" was the defiant retort. "Don't you try ter scare me, fer you can't make it work fer a cent, old man. Not much!"

"Be off with you!"

"Will I? Mebbe ducks will eat fire!"

"Who is this girl?" asked the young lady, curiously.

"Don't mind her, Miss Reymore, she is a half-crazy child who—"

"Crazy, be I?" cried Patty Beeks. "Well, you'll wish I was before you get through with me. Miss Reymore, ef that's your name, don't you go in that cab. Ef ye do you won't bring up where ye want to go. I hev been down by the door, here, an' I've heerd Steve Slim an' that precious cabby talkin', an' they planned ter—"

"Girl, get back to your pots and kettles!" sharply ordered Steve. "I won't hear any more of your crazy talk. Miss Reymore, do not heed her, or let her annoy you. Kindly enter the carriage and we will go on and be rid of this annoyance."

"Wait!" the young lady directed. "Patty does not look deranged. I will hear what you have to say, my girl—"

"But the hour grows late," urged Steve, "and this vicinity is not of the best character—"

"If you are so solicitous of my welfare, why did you keep me as long in there as you did?"

"So he could kidnap ye!" cried Patty Beeks.

"It is a lie!" hotly declared Steve.

"Oh! is it? The lady don't think so, an' she is goin' ter hear me, Mister Steve Slim?" coolly responded Patty.

"I am," added Miss Reymore, calmly. "What have you to tell, my girl? Speak fearlessly."

Steve made one more effort to frustrate the revelation, but he was unsuccessful, and had to stand tamely while Patty fired her broad-side.

"I heerd Steve an' cabby talk right here, five minutes ago, an' Steve paid t'other fel-

ler ten dollars fer ter not take you where you wanted ter go, but to kidnap ye inter some den!"

CHAPTER III.

A CASE OF FISTS.

It was a direct accusation, and made with an air so sincere that even in the dim light Miss Reymore was seen to grow pale.

"False, false as the fiends!" muttered Steve, angrily.

"Be more explicit," directed Miss Reymore.

"I come down ter the door," went on Patty Beek, "an' cabby was standin' here by his hosses. Then Steve Slim come down the stairs. I didn't want ter see him, so I kinder edged in by the dark shadders behind the door an' he passed me by, but I was right where I could hear all that was said. This is the way of it."

Patty took breath and resumed with vivacity.

"You are not to take the young woman back as she come, John," he says, "but you are ter drive her another way an' keep her blind ter the fact by various tricks."

"All right," says John.

"I have her here by means of a false scheme," says Steve Slim, "an' it must be a go. Ef I let her go home it will soon reach her ears that I have throwed down Henry Barrington—"

"Did he say that?" cried Miss Reymore.

"He did, fer sure, miss."

"Throwed down?" What does that mean?"

"Why, that he has done Henry Barrington up by some trick; mebbe by takin' advantage of his trust in him, ye see."

"And they said that?"

"Why, sure, miss," assured Patty Beeks.

"Sir," cried Miss Reymore, "what have you done to Henry Barrington?"

"Nothing," answered Steve, sullenly.

"Do you deny your own words?"

"I deny that I ever used such words."

"Has not Henry Barrington enough to contend with, with his unfortunate disposition, without being tempted by those of stronger nature? For shame, sir, if you have done more to lead him on the down road!"

"Miss Reymore, I know nothing of this vague crime you allege against me," declared Steve, with an appearance of candor. "I assure you it is all bosh. Tais girl has lied—"

"Now, see here, mister, you be careful," cautioned Patty. "I ain't a pugilist, but I kin use my finger-nails as wal as anybody when I git my mad up, an' I'll walk all over yer collar ef you tell me I'm a liar. I'll do ye up cold. See?"

It was not the most refined of language, but it was clear that Patty was a child of the streets in the full sense of the word, and it was what must be expected from her.

"And I," he declared, fiercely, "will wring your neck—"

"Silence!" exclaimed Miss Reymore, with severity. "You condemn yourself by such remarks, and I will not go in the cab. Patty, do you live in this house?"

"I breathe here," amended Miss Beeks.

"I will see you again. Just now, have you the courage to walk with me to the Bowery?"

"Laws! why not?" asked Patty, with wide open eyes.

"It's a hard locality—"

"Ha! ha!" laughed the girl. "You don't s'pose that would worry me, do ye? Why, ef any man, woman or kid should touch me I'd dislcercate his cerebral columb, you bet!"

"Come with me, then."

"Miss Reymore," spoke Steve, with an ugly air, "do I understand that you really refuse to accept my escort home?"

"You are to understand just that."

She said it, and it would have been a stupid person who would have doubted that she meant it. Steve was not stupid in that way, but he was in one other. Enraged at his failure to carry out the original plot, he lost his head and determined on a rash course.

"We will see!" he cried.

With a quick movement he seized Miss Reymore and began dragging her toward the cab.

"Give your hand, John!" he ordered.

"We must act promptly."

"I'm with ye!"

The cabman thought he was, but Patty Beeks gave a little shriek which might have attracted some attention under any condition. As it was, the outcry was not needed. Some one had been watching with rapt attention, and just as Miss Reymore was forced to the door of the cab there was an occurrence which put a Western cyclone to the blush.

John got a blow under the ear which knocked him under the carriage, and then it appeared as if a score of mules were maliciously kicking Steve Slim in the head and other parts of his anatomy.

Thump! thump! thump! came the sound of blows, and as they fell a voice joined in with them.

"Take that, you tarnal skunk! Merlest women folks, will ye? Wal, maybe, but not while Phin Pratt is around. Oh! I'm in the drive, an' no logs don't git by me. How is that fer a snifter? I'll flatten yer nose fer ye—"

But Steve, bleeding and flurried, had seen enough of it, and he now took to his heels and ran as if life depended upon it. The single blow had been enough for cabby, too, and when he crawled out from under his vehicle, muddy and damaged, he sprung to the box and sent the horse away at full speed.

Phineas P. Pratt stood panting but victorious, while Billy, who had done his share, was by his side, laughing heartily. The man from Maine had struck like a battering-ram, but he had so little knowledge of "science" that his wild churning of the air with his fists had been very amusing.

Miss Reymore was much cooler than was to be expected, and she came forward and addressed the rescuers with sweetness and tact.

"It is my fortune, good or bad, to be a woman, and to have a woman's weakness, but there need be nothing for such persons to fear while men so brave and chivalrous as you walk our streets."

"I ain't got the money ter ride," answered Phin, practically.

"You have courage and honor. Sir, I thank you heartily, and hope you will find as noble defenders in your own hour of need."

"Miss, don't mention it. I kin lick a dozen jest like them with my hands tied behind me, ye see. Besides, Billy did most of it."

"Draw it mild," suggested Billy. "It was you who played John L. on the feller's head, so don't dodge your honors. Miss, we are modest, but somebody did hammer that critter silly, fer sure. It's all right. Now, what can we do fer you further? How will you get home?"

"Kindly walk with me to a station of the Elevated Road, and after that I shall be all right."

"Et shall be done."

Miss Reymore told Patty that she should call and see her, and then the other three persons walked toward the Bowery. It was only a few steps to the Houston street station, and ere long the train had rolled away with the young lady as a passenger.

She had taken their names and residences, and intimated that she should also see them again soon.

"Say, William," quoth the gentleman from Skowhegan, "what do you call that?"

"Call her a mighty pretty girl, fer one thing."

"William, you're right; you are, sure as gum is gum! Thunder an' prohibition whisky! but I never seen the like of it! I calculate we hev as pretty gals in our town ter-hum as old Maine kin boast of, but I do vow that this one lays them all out. Why, honey would be bitter in her mouth!"

"She's all wool an' a yard wide."

"Wal, you bet! Say, I would jest lay down an' die fer sech a gal, an' there ain't no nonsense in a Skowhegan feller, either. When we admire a gal we usually think of our own interests, but you can't do that when ye see an *angel*, by gosh!"

It took some time to calm the Maine man down, so powerfully was he shaken by the beauty, refinement and elegance of this high-bred New York girl, but he was finally aroused when Billy reminded him that the sights of the famous Bowery were yet to be seen.

They crossed and went on down the west side of the street. The passing crowd and the flashy stores by the way awakened Phin's wonder and admiration, but it was not to be a mere sight-seeing expedition.

They were going slowly, and as they did so a man went past who was of figure majestic enough to call Phin's attention at once.

"Looks like a soldier," he commented.

"Ef ever man was out o' place on the Bowery it's him," added Billy.

This last remark was very true. The person referred to had the best of clothes, and even a duil observer would see that he was of the blue-blood element of New York. He walked with a firm, confident step, and paid no attention to those who had spoken of him.

His gaze, however, was that of one wide-awake, and that he lost nothing by the way was soon seen.

His face lighted up, and with two long strides he gained the side of a younger man who was passing and caught him by the arm savagely.

"You scoundrel! I have you!" he deeply uttered.

The man thus captured gave a great start and then seemed to shrink away, as it were, in the grasp upon him.

"Colonel Reymore!" he muttered.

"Hi!" cried Bowery Billy, in Phin's ear, "did ye hear that? Reymore is the name."

"So was my angel's," added Phin.

"Yes, an', b'jinks! him an' her look a bit alike. Hold up, Phin, an' we may see some more fun!"

CHAPTER IV.

FRESH ALARM FOR PHIN.

If there was a prospect of fun for the man from Maine and Bowery Billy, there did not seem to be any for the man who had been so unceremoniously and roughly brought up by the athletic man of military appearance.

He shrunk still more, though Billy thought there was more than craven fear in the dismay he showed.

"Yes, I am Colonel Reymore," replied the military-looking man. "If I mistake not you are Jack Olmsted. What title do you think would best suit *you*?" and sarcasm and irony were in every word.

"I don't know," murmured Jack, gloomily.

"How would thief do?"

"Colonel!"

"Or ingrate? Or Judas? Or weak-fool? Man, I came here to-night thinking you would be here. The Bowery catches the dregs of the city, and you are now a *dreg*!"

"Colonel, do not condemn me unheard," protested Jack, weakly.

"Well, haven't I given you all the chance to talk that man could ask for? And you

have not availed yourself of the opportunity. Don't condemn you unheard! Humph! Rosalie said the same thing. You are a precious pair, you two. Take you, my daughter and Henry Barrington and you would do for freaks in some museum."

Bowery Billy nudged Phin.

"All one family, the Reymores be," he whispered.

"What the darn is up?" demanded Phin.

"Wait and watch!"

Jack Olmsted's face flushed.

"I beg that you will not be hasty, colonel," he requested, earnestly. "I do not claim more honor than I have."

"Then you claim but little. Jack, if I had a good, sound heart—a heart as sound as my head—you would be in a prison-cell this instant. If ever man deserved it, you do. What have I done for you, and what have you done for *me*?"

Jack looked only at the sidewalk.

"I took you, a homeless, friendless boy, and started you in life in my own store. You became honored, trusted and liked by all. In return you robbed me—"

"Colonel, I swear I did not!"

The drooping face was lifted, and the accused man looked his companion full in the eyes. It was as if he was actuated by conscious rectitude and was about to establish the fact.

"Prove it!"

Jack's head dropped again.

"I have given you all the chance in the world," Reymore added. "I have deferred arrest when any one else would have moved; I have been as anxious as any one could be for you to clear yourself, but you will not. Will not? Bah! you cannot!"

"I am innocent," muttered Jack.

"Some one is guilty."

There was no reply.

"Your silence on former occasions proves that you know who it was. If you are not the one, you had better tell me who it was before you get into the Tombs, for go there you surely will unless you speak out."

"I have not said that I know."

Colonel Reymore made a gesture of supreme impatience.

"Weak wretch!" he exclaimed.

Again Jack flushed.

"Consider my position," the colonel went on, earnestly. "I made you what you are. I took you, a friendless street boy, and started you on the road to success—"

"You did, Heaven bless you!"

Again Reymore made an impatient gesture.

"You grew to manhood trusted and honored. More than this, you and my daughter, Rosalie, saw fit to fall in love with each other. Most fathers would have said you were as far below her as earth is below heaven, but I never remonstrated. Believing in you, I tacitly gave my consent to it all. What now?"

Jack shook his head gloomily.

"Money was stolen from my store. You were situated so you should have known something of it. I asked you about it. You told me nothing. The situation grew worse, and you seemed to be the thief. I spoke to you, and told you I knew you could prove your innocence. Did you do it?"

Jack shook his head.

"Right, you did not. Instead, you fled from my sight. Even then, even now, I have not told the police of you. I keep your guilty secret, hoping you may be saved, whether you may be innocent or guilty, but you do not help me one jot or tittle."

"I can't."

"Why not?"

"I am unable to tell you."

"Jack, you and Rosalie are the biggest dunces in New York. You are more mysterious than an old grandmother. She can't, and you can't! Confound it! I am tempted

to put the two of you in jail; I am, by Jupiter! It would serve you just right. I lost three thousand dollars out of that theft. Perhaps you think that is fun, and more when you say, after being implored to tell me something definite, that you *can't tell!* Hang your mystery!"

"Colonel Reymore, I should be glad to explain—"

"Then why in thunder don't you?"

"I can't!"

"Ye gods! I have a good mind to have you arrested, now and here. Your 'can'ts' are simply atrocious."

Jack was again silent.

"See here, young man," the colonel added, "I'll give you three days to think of this further, and if you don't then give up skulking in the Bowery, and come to me with a full account of all you know, I will have you arrested. Listen to that, for it is my ultimatum. Remember!"

Abruptly the indignant gentleman wheeled and walked away. Jack watched him briefly, and then, as if afraid he would change his mind, the young man turned and hurried off through Hester street.

"Wal, that is interesting!" quoth Phin Pratt, who, with Billy, had been able to hear all this without giving suspicion that they were acting the listeners.

"I should smile," replied Billy, vaguely.

"Of course his gal, Rosalie, is the same we seen in Bleeker street. Don't ye think so?"

"Yes."

"What was she doin' there?"

"My frien'," replied Billy, "it may pay us ter find out, an' we will make a try at it in the mornin'. What we see there, an' what we hev jest heard there, hinge tergether. Now, we only want to learn a bit more an' the case will go as merry as a marriage bell."

"If Rosalie is in the marriage party I would like ter be chief bell-ringer, by gosh!"

"We'll look inter it. I hev a notion that Steve Slim is in this same game that is worritin' Jack, an' I guess the whole thing is jest about in my line. I am the so-called Bowery Billy, the Bouncer, fer I bounce bunco chaps an' crooks off the Bowery. Wal, I set Steve down as bein' a crook, as wal as a skunk, so it will behoove me ter look wal ter him an' the whole biz."

"Go in, William, an' I'll stick by ye while my gallus buttons hold on, by gosh!"

Phineas shook hands with his ally, and the case was duly settled as far as compact went. Work came after.

Interested as Phin was he could not keep his mind off from the living panorama of the Bowery. He saw about all that was to be seen, and each type of human character which was new to him aroused his close scrutiny.

They had turned back and reached the corner of Houston street when he nudged Billy and whispered:

"Wait a bit! I want ter study that constable. He's big an' strong enough fer a Maine log-driver, an' looks too pretty ter kill in his smart clothes. Let me study him."

The "constable" was a blue-coated policeman. He stood on the corner in that state of massive repose which is the chief glory of the city policeman, and was like a small king on his throne, Phin thought.

"Gosh! you'd think he owned the whole road!" declared Mr. Pratt.

"He does, as long as the roundsman is elsewhere, but when that lord of the night puts in an appearance you will see Mr. Patrolman shrink up," answered experienced Billy.

"There comes a dashin' lookin' chap. Is he a Wall street banker?"

"He's a sport."

"Bets on hosses, does he?"

"Wal, I reckon he takes chances on races, hoss an' human," Billy ventured, for the new-comer had the marks which went to tell of the genuine sport, and much which suggested the sharper to the wise youth.

Somewhat to his surprise the sport stopped in front of the patrolman, whom he addressed with a mixture of familiarity and hesitation.

"Good-evening, officer!"

"Hallo, Lane, is it you?"

"Nobody else."

"You're not in Sing Sing yet, I see."

"Hush! Don't advertise me. Fine evening. Have a cigar?"

"Thanks; I will."

"Anything new?"

"In your line? Well, I haven't heard of any new break by you, and I don't know that we need to use you."

Billy touched Phin gently.

"Policemen an' detectives use crooks ter tell on each other," he whispered, in explanation of the words from the officer.

"I am always at your service," responded Lane.

"And always on the watch to fleece countrymen."

"Come now, don't be hard on a feller. I'm living on the square."

"So is the Evil One. Let it drop, though. You ask if there is anything new. I believe there is. I heard, to-night, just as I came out on my beat, that a man had been murdered that I have seen with you before now. His name is Happy Harry."

Three persons started at this information, and Phin caught at Billy's sleeve to get him away, but the Bunco Bouncer was not to be taken off at such a stage of affairs.

Lane gave a genuine start of surprise.

"Happy Harry murdered?" he cried.

"So I am told."

"When? How? By whom?"

"Early this evening, and by a man and a boy whose names are unknown to the police."

"Gosh! le's dust!"

It was Phin's frightened voice which uttered these words, but Billy did not get flustered.

"Take it cool!" was his advice.

"But they mean us."

CHAPTER V.

OMINOUS NEWS.

"HUSH yer cackle!"

It was not the most elegant of advice, but Bowery Billy was impatient that Phin should make comments which would cause him to lose any part of the talk between Lane and the patrolman. He had lost some, but he intended to hear the rest.

"How was Happy Harry done up, anyhow?" Lane inquired, anxiously.

"He was in his room at the hotel when a man and a boy called to see him. Half an hour later he was found dead in the room, and the visitors had gone."

"Why should they kill him?"

"That remains to be found out."

"Aren't they caught, yet?"

"No."

"How was it done—with a knife?"

"So I heard. How did you know it wasn't a revolver?" suspiciously inquired the officer.

"I inferred that a revolver shot would call the attention of the people in a hotel at such an hour."

"Probably."

"Well, I'm sorry Harry has shuffled off the mortal coil. He was a good, companionable fellow, and—"

"And you were leading him along the road to crime."

"I? No, sir; no!"

"He was a scholar of yours, but it don't matter, now. You had better amble on, but see to it you don't try to fleece any countrymen on my beat. Good-night!"

The officer turned his back, and Lane had no recourse but to follow the advice given. It was nothing new to him to be told to "move on!" He belonged to the class of criminals who, though spotted by the police, and constantly under watch in a general way, make themselves useful now and then by betraying other criminals, and thus keep on familiar terms with the guardians of the law.

Strange and devious is the way of justice in modern Gotham.

Phin was delighted to see the interview broken up.

"Le's skip!" he urged. "We was mighty rash ter come out when the woods was full o' men looking fer us, all ready ter pounce on us fer killin' the feller we never did kill. Le's skip!"

"You have not seen all the sights—"

"Darn the sights! One o' the sights I kin git along without seein' fer a lifetime is you an' me hauled off ter jail by the constables. But it's got ter come, sure as shootin'. We shall be seized an' incarcerated, an' all Skowhegan will ring with the news. Gosh! I don't believe but I shall be the first log-driver what was ever hung!"

"Ain't you proud of it?"

"Proud! Thunder, what do ye take me fer? Pride goes before a fall, an' it will be a mighty serious fall when I drop about eight feet with a stone tied ter the other end o' the rope."

"We do it with electricity, here, now."

"A most unhuman way. Gosh! I wish I was back in old Somerset county ag'in! I wish ter mighty that the Pratt who died in England and left me his money had lived ter be a hund'ud years older."

"Phin, be you still expectin' fer ter get that wealth?"

"Certainly I be."

"Then you will get done up so bad you'll lose all the profit on log-drivin' fer the past ten years."

"Pshaw!"

"Mark my words, it's all a bunco scheme. You say your ansisters hev been in this country fer over two hundred years. Wal, ef you expect ter heir English money by reachin' back inter the dim and dusty abyss o' time, you'll get a wrench o' the pocket-book that will leave you dead broke an' melancholy."

"William, you wouldn't say that ef you could read all o' Rollo Dulaney's letters. They are jest beautiful letters; they are, sure as gum is gum."

"Humph!"

"It won't be 'Humph!' when I git my ten thousand dollars."

"No; but it'll be 'Humph!' when the bunco sharps get yer five hundred dollars, b'jinks!"

It was plain that the two could not agree on the point at issue, and they dropped it by mutual consent and went home. Both slept in the same bed that night. Phin had taken a prodigious fancy to Billy, and was so set upon the idea of keeping him with him that the boy could not well refuse.

He agreed all the more willingly because he was bound to defeat the plot which he believed lurked behind the alleged chance to get the ten thousand dollars.

The night passed as peacefully as could be expected, but Phin did not sleep so peacefully as he was-won't to do in the Maine woods. He was troubled with dreams in which his fears on a certain point played a fruitless part, and he summed up the result in the morning thus:

"I had more difficulty than a hen with thirty chickens. That Harry Hudson matter worries me mighty, an' I was lawfully hung six different times durin' the night—woke up chokin' every blessed occasion."

Billy tried to console him, but it was still harder to do when they had secured a morning paper. In that sheet they found an ac-

count of the death of Happy Harry. Killed in his own room with a knife, said the article, and then came this ominous paragraph:

"The police are very reticent, but it was learned by the reporter that the murderers are known by sight, if not by name. There are a man and a boy who went to Harry's room just before the assassination. They probably will be arrested before night."

Phin's eyes seemed about to jump out of their sockets.

"I knew it!" he cried.

"Knew what?"

"We shall be taken up fer what we didn't do!"

"Keep cool, neighbor."

"Cool! An' we ter spend the night in the jug!"

"They ain't got us yet. Phineas, you want ter learn ter take things in newspapers with some salt. The reporter wanted ter prophesy that, so if it occurred he would hev the credit o' bein' wise. See?"

"He's a dern mean skunk ter want glory at our expense."

"He ain't got it, yet."

"Where do you seen any hope?"

"I didn't say I see any, but we are ter be ketched afore we're incassered, ye know. I admit it's a bad go, but let's keep up courage. Hope on, my frien'. Hope, though it is a measly bad fix."

Billy believed it. He saw how easy it would be to attach suspicion to them, and greatly he regretted their unwise flight from the hotel. If they had, instead, gone direct to the clerk and told their story it would have been very different, but it was too late to regret the consequences of Phin's bad judgment.

"We shall be taken up an' hung," was the burden of the log-driver's lament, and Billy was afraid the first of these calamities would come upon them.

Presently the Bunco Bouncer suggested that they go out.

"Go out?" echoed Phil. "Thunder! I won't leave this room!"

"Oh! yes, you will."

"An' git strung ter a lamp-post by a mob! Never, sir; never!"

"Our way is to move around about our business just ez usual—"

"My business is right in this room until night. Then I'll call on Rollo Dulaney an' git my money, after which Phineas P. Pratt will skip fer Somerset county as spry as his legs will take him!"

It was hard to change this plan, but Phin was not so much of a coward as his words at times indicated, and Billy argued with him until he gave way and agreed to go around a little, if it was done prudently.

He, as well as the New York boy, wanted to know more about the episode of which they had seen a part the previous night, and he decided to accompany Billy to the building where Patty Beeks lived, to seek for light on that affair.

On the way Billy took occasion to examine a Directory to see if there was any sign of the alleged legal firm of Dulaney & Jones Brothers, but nothing of the sort was found.

"Just as I told ye," remarked the boy.

"That don't prove nothin'."

"Why not?"

"Them bookmaker's is careless, an' it probly got skipped somehow."

"They couldn't skip what don't exist."

"Pshaw!"

"Wal, go it, Phineas, but you'll be sorry later on; now you mark my words."

"I should be sorry ef I missed that ten thousand dollars."

There was no such thing as convincing him, and Billy let it drop for the time. Resuming their way, they were soon in the presence of the young girl they desired to see.

"How goes it, Miss Beeks?" asked Billy, genially.

"I'm all right; I'm never anything else."

"Good fer you! Anything more new on the old score?"

"About them we rescued last night?"

"Jes' so."

"I ain't seen them sence."

"I'm a good bit interested in that case, an' I've called around ter see ef you will give me some pertic'lers about it."

"Why shouldn't I, when you slammed Steve Slim 'round so beautifully?"

"No reason why you shouldn't, so wade in, my gal, an' let us hear all."

CHAPTER VI.

DECOYED.

"WHAT'S first?" inquired Patty.

"Who an' what is the young lady you helped out o' diffikilty, last night?" returned Billy.

"I know she is a Miss Rosalie Reymore—at least, that is all I know of my own self; but there is a man in the buildin' who says he knows all about 'em. I hev plenty o' facts about Mister Steve Slim—he's called 'Slim' 'cause he's so wasp-waisted, ye see."

"Jes' so. Wal, what about him?"

"He's a bunco man!"

"I thought so. Perced!"

"Steve has a pal named Lane, an' they are in the biz o' bleedin' folks. Most o' their victims is greenies from the country, but ef they kin git a grip on a city man, they do et ez quick ez they would eat quail on toast."

"Hev they a grip on Miss Reymore?"

"Yes."

"Thunder! what has she done ter be feed fer sech p'isen skunks?"

"Nothin', but she has a cousin named Henry Barrington who is goin' ter the bad. He's weak o' will an' easy led astray, an' he's fell in with Steve Slim an' Lane, an' they are taking him along the down-road. Ye see, Miss Reymore has a rich father, an' though Barrington ain't got no money, it looks as ef et was the plan ter git him inter their power fully, an' then call on Reymore fer the cash ter help him out."

"Nice scheme, by jinks!"

"That was what brought Miss Reymore here last night."

"I don't ketch on."

"Ye see, she is doin' all she can ter save Barrington, an' ter do this she has tried ter move Steve Slim."

"Wal, she's got a big contract."

"Might ez wal try ter move a crockerdile ter refuse meat. Why, Steve ain't got one redeemin' feature in his make-up. But she ketched at the blind hope, I s'pose, an' ez Steve claimed he wasn't so bad ez he might be, he got her ter come here on pretense that she could see her cousin—Barrington has been keepin' out o' sight, ye see."

"An' et was a decoy?"

"Et was, sure. She come here, see Steve an' waited fer Barrington. He didn't come, of course. When she got tired o' waitin' she wanted ter go off, an' she started. Now, I don't know all about this, but old Slim had some object in lurin' her here which didn't pan out."

"Expected an ally ter come, mebbe."

"Shouldn't wonder. You know what happened when she got tired of the useless wait an' tried ter go home."

"I do, b'jinks! an' so does Phin. Slim got lammed the worst way."

"Served him right."

"Correct ye be, Patty."

"If I understand this," added Phineas, "Rosalie has a weak-minded cousin she is tryin' ter save from ruin, but Steve is bound ter keep it up. The cousin ain't the only one he has designs on. He would hev abducted Rosalie, last night, ef he could."

"I guess that was a sudden, rash thought o' his," suggested Patty.

"Another nail drove," agreed Billy. "The mystery is about all out o' the thing now."

"The fightin' ain't all over," declared Patty, with a sharp nod. "I don't s'pose this is any o' my business, but I'm goin' ter make et so, an' ef Mister Steve Slim don't mind his biz, I'll scratch his eyes out—I will, sure ez you're livin'!"

"Bravo!"

"I ain't a tough," pursued Patty, warming to her subject, "but I took a fancy ter Miss Reymore, an' I'll fight fer her, ef it ain't a nice thing to do."

"Put yer fin there, Patty!" cried Billy, extending his hand. "We are with ye in this game, an' we'll make music on the frontier. No bunco sharps can't raise Cain without our bouncin' them off the whole claim, b'jinks!"

"I've been awful mad ever since Mr. Warriner told me about this."

"Warriner? Who's he?"

"Lives in this house; has a room all by hisself an' does his own housework. Writes hist'ry, an' lets his hair grow long."

"What has he to do with it?"

"Nothin'. He was out last night, but he comes ter me this mornin', an' says he, 'I heer'd there was a row here in the evenin'. What was it about?'"

"I guess he found out."

"He got all I could tell, but as I only knew what I see, there was much lackin'. That's where he comes inter play, fer he says he knew the Reymore family by hearsay, an' then he told me about the black sheep o' the family, as he called Barrington."

"I s'pose Warriner is a relative of the family. Eh?"

"Ef you kin find out you'll do better than any one else. Warriner is a gent that keeps his business to himself, he is; an' nobody kin claim ter hev drawed him out much."

"Be you sure he wa'n't in the plot against Rosalie?"

"Bless ye, yes; he's as honest ez the day is long."

"Then why was this ranch selected fer the place o' lure?"

"Because there is some mighty hard cases in the buildin'. There is some who would ez soon kill a feller bein' ez ter sing a chant, I do believe."

"Not the best place fer you ter live, Patty."

"Why not?"

"They might hurt you."

"So they might turn decent! Say, ef any o' them thinks they kin do me dirt, jest let 'em try it; that's all!"

Brave Patty threw her arms akimbo and looked so defiant that Billy was awed with admiration. The girl was a treasure, he thought.

Business was over, and the two visitors prepared to depart. Patty lived on the third floor, and she did not dream of going down with them. Thus, they went alone.

All progressed in a matter-of-fact way until they reached the front door. This they found locked, much to their surprise, and they looked for the key in vain. They were just thinking that they would have to go back and get Patty's help when an adjacent door at one side of the hall opened.

A woman appeared.

"What is it?" she asked.

"We want ter get out," Billy explained.

"Oh! I thought it was Pete an' his boy. I see you're strangers, so it ain't to be expected you would know that door is bein' repaired on the outside, an' is locked fer a few minutes. You can go out by the other way. Come right through my room."

Billy did not remember seeing more than one door to the house, but the invitation was so friendly in seeming that he accepted it as it appeared to be. He and Phin entered the room indicated.

The man from Maine was ahead, and he went with his usual blundering freedom of

movement, not using his eyes to any advantage. As Billy passed the threshold there was a click and the door closed sharply.

His attention turned that way for a moment, and it was while he was thus occupied that a groan fell upon his ears. Quickly he turned his head again, and as he did so Phin fell over against him and almost took him off his feet.

It was a little struggle to regain his usual position, and when he had succeeded in doing so he found himself looking into the end of a revolver.

"Be still or you are a dead man!" hissed a voice.

Phin Pratt lay unconscious at Billy's feet, and the weapon covered him fully. The boy was trapped.

He saw three men in front of him and realized a part of the truth. The rest was soon forced upon him.

"Kill the kid if he yells!" added a second man.

Billy did not yell. He was wise enough to know when he was well off, and the revolver which bore upon him had a meaning which it would not be prudent to defy. Instead of inviting certain trouble he assumed a peaceful look and mildly inquired:

"Say, what's all this ruction about, anyhow?"

His question passed unheeded. The men were flustered by their own work and its possible consequences, and they all tried to speak at once.

"Tie them up!"

"Open the door!"

"Hit him ag'in!"

"Use the ropes first!" urged the former speaker.

"We waste time. Never mind the tying; we shall be able to see to them directly. If you won't see to the door, I will."

He sprung forward and raised a trap-door in the floor. It was simply a contrivance to avoid going too far to gain access to the cellar, but it came in good play then.

A black gap yawned before Billy.

"Down with them, at once!"

So urged the leading spirit, and he made a rush for the Bowery boy.

Billy did not like the looks of the gap in the least, and as it seemed violent work was intended, he no longer tried to get in his protest by word. Instead, he met the rush of the fellow with a straight, scientific blow, and the aggressor toppled over like a tenpin. If he had been the only opponent Billy would not have had cause to fear, but it was very different.

The other two pounced upon him and he was dragged toward the yawning gap.

CHAPTER VII.

PENNED UP WITH THE ENEMY.

BOWERY BILLY was small of stature, but was unusually strong for one of his years, a fact which his enemies soon discovered, for he made a telling effort before being subdued, but the odds were too much for the Bowery boy.

His arms were pinioned, and then he was flung down the trap!

One moment his face showed at the opening; then it vanished from view, and the rogues turned toward Phineas Pratt.

"He is recovering his senses!" was the cry. "Away with him before he gets into fighting trim."

Accordingly, the man from Maine was seized and cast down after his young ally. With a sigh of relief the leader dropped the cover of the trap.

"We are luckier than we dared hope for," he remarked.

"They will be making a rumpus down there which will call the attention of all in the house."

"Not much, for we will go down and settle them, and then Steerer Steve must pay us well."

If the trapped detectives could have heard the comment it would have thrown a good deal of light on the secret of the attack on them, but they were not where they could hear anything of the sort.

Billy had fallen several feet and received considerable of a shock, but did not feel that any bones were broken. He quickly struggled to his feet, and none too soon, for just then the body of Phineas Pratt descended, narrowly missing him in its fall. A groan escaped the man from Skowhegan.

Billy was in total darkness, and he would have been at a loss to know where else he was, had not circumstances helped him to form some idea. He had fallen from the lower floor of the house: he must now be in the cellar, since the house was not of the kind that had basements.

"Hello, Phin!" he uttered, hurriedly.

There was no reply.

"Say, be you knocked out fer keeps?"

Phineas said nothing, so Billy bent over him and touched his face.

"Ef there's a spark o' life in yer anatomy, let it be mentioned immediate!" he urged.

It was not that Phin was changed from a previous line of conduct, but because he had just found his senses in part that he also found his voice.

"Be I dead?" he inquired, dismally.

"Dead? Why, you're all right, my frien'. Git a wiggle on an' let yer voice be heerd ter some purpose."

"I thought I was killed."

"You're all right, I say."

"Ef I be, I wonder how I'd feel ef I was all wrong."

The lumberman from Maine struggled up to a sitting position.

"Hit by a log in the jam, sure," he added. "Got it in the bread-basket, an' the pesky thing hurts."

"Phin, we have been set onto an' flung down cellar. Stir yer stumps an' help me think, or we shall both git done up fer keeps."

"Say, did they chuck us down here?"

"They did, sartain."

"Be we in the potato-bin?"

"We are down suller, sure."

"Wal, I'll be gosh-darned! Little did I think when I left Skowhegan that I should ever come ter this. I s'pose I'm as good as dead, or worse."

"Hist! They're comin' down!"

"What for?"

"Ter kill us, I reckon! Pull yerself tergether, old man, fer we must rise an' shake ourselves or we shall get done up. Listen!"

The foe, or somebody else, was certainly coming. There was a stir in the further part of the cellar, and feet sounded on the stairs. Phineas did not yet seem fully himself, but Billy was not slow to recognize the pressing need of action. He had intimated to his companion that murder was intended. He was not sure that such was the case, but, anyhow, they had the liveliest grounds for concern.

What could be done?

"Come with me!" directed the Bowery boy, hurriedly. "They will expect ter find us right under the trap, an' we kin gain one lap in the race while they are lookin', I guess. Hustle!"

He pulled Phin along with him. His feet struck a stone and he fell, but it was on soft earth and he made no betraying sound. Up he got once more, but his movements were now more cautious. Very secretly he retreated to the dark recesses of the cellar.

A light showed where the foe stood.

"Now, let's finish this up without delay," spoke one of the latter. "We don't want any ruction."

"We ought ter have tied them when we had a chance."

"Oh! we can finish them!"

All this Billy heard. He had no means of

knowing just what was meant by "finishing" them, but, naturally, his fears suggested the very worst construction of the speech, and he believed his life and Phin's were in danger.

"Be you armed?" he whispered to his ally.

"No."

"Nor me. How are we going ter hold our own?"

"Say, ef I git at them skunks ag'in there will be weepin' an' gnashin' o' teeth; now you bet high on *that!* They hit me in coward style, an' I'll show them yer uncle ain't o' the kind ter be done up every heat without a kick on his part."

"Be prudent, Phin,"

"I will, an' ez dangerous as I kin!"

Billy would have been glad for a transient gleam of light in his section. If there was a club, or anything else, which could be used in defense, he wanted to know of it. He felt around but discovered nothing. They were still without weapons.

The enemy, in the mean while, had finished all preparations for the next move. One of their number was left by the foot of the stairs, and in his hand was a revolver. He was to guard that passage, and he seemed to have the means of doing it well.

In vain Billy tried to form a plan of campaign.

He saw no way of meeting a superior force under promising conditions.

They advanced. The light of the feeble lamp flickered on grim stone walls and revealed, more distinctly, the brutal faces of the two men who were there with the avowed purpose of "finishing" the inoffensive twain.

"Phin, can't you think of some way?" again whispered the Bowery boy, as his own wits refused to work.

"Not a think."

"Keep well back."

"I'd ruther sashay right up ter them. Say the word, an' I'll agree ter lick the whole gang single handed!"

Phineas was a marvel of muscle, but Billy did not forget that the foe were armed, and he would not hear to such rashness.

The searchers reached the place where they knew their victims had fallen, and then their voices expressed their disappointment as they realized the situation.

"Gone!"

"Can they have escaped from the suller?"

"Nonsense! The stairs is the only way out, an' we know they did not go there. They are hidin' in the dark shadders. Keep on, an' jest have your peepers open; then all will be well."

The search was continued! With the light well advanced they sought along the area of darkness, but without result. Billy had taken charge and was keeping up a plan of masterly retreat. His own feet fell with scarcely more sound than the movements of a cat, but with Phin it was different. It was pure luck that the rough man from Maine did not fall and direct attention to them at once.

Under Billy's skillful lead they managed to keep out of the way, and, at the same time, not betray themselves to the guard by the stairs, but the leader of the enemy finally stopped short.

"This is played out!" he declared.

"They have got out of the suller," added one of his companions.

"I don't believe it. I don't see how they could. They are still here, but they are dodging us. Even now they are within sound of our voices, an', no doubt, laughin' at our vain efforts ter get them."

"Ef we could light up the whole suller—"

"We can't, so we must do the next best thing. Sam, lock the door above an' then join us."

Sam obeyed.

"Now," pursued the leader, "we will all move at once, but in different directions.

That is the only way to find them. Sam, go to the left, an' you, Tom, keep ter the right. I'll move directly through the middle o' the suller. Now, move on, all o' you. *Move!*"

CHAPTER VIII.

TROUBLE WITH PHIN'S LEGS.

The last order was obeyed, though reluctantly. Sam and Tom remembered how big and strong Phin was, and were unwilling to give him a chance at them in the dark. They did not like the plan, but it was carried out as directed.

Then began the difficult task for the Bowery boy and his friend of evading the whole three, but they soon found themselves driven into a corner by Sam's movements.

At that point there was a box, and behind this they crouched. The scheme was to keep out of sight as long as they could, and then to fight desperately for life.

Sam came on cautiously.

"Dark as thunder!" he muttered, his huge hand put out in advance, as if to feel the way.

The fugitives snuggled in behind the box as close as circumstances would admit. Retreat was now out of the case; they must stay and accept the result of the search.

Sam soon discovered the box, and did so to his sorrow. His shin struck a sharp corner and he recoiled with a groan.

"Have you found them?" cried Tom.

"Found thunder!" howled Sam. "I've broke my shin-bone on some blamed old dry-goods case."

"You fool! attend to business!" directed the leader.

"Call me that again an' I will come over an' thump you in the nose. See? I reckon my shins are as good as anybody else's."

He was not answered and the storm quieted down, but he was more careful, moving very cautiously away to avoid the box. The fugitives did not stir.

Sam passed on, and Billy and Phin ventured to breathe once more. The searchers met at a point and compared notes.

"They've give us the shake an' got ter the Battery by now, Cap," ventured Sam.

"And I tell you, I know they are still here. They are too cunnin', an' have been dodgin' us. Your search was not any good. Do you forget that Steve said he would give us fifty dollars to catch 'em an' shut them up here? Mebbe you don't want that money?"

"Oh! but we do!"

"Earn it, then! We get the fifty, an' we may scoop more. Ye see, the boy an' the man see Steve act rusty ter a gal last night, an' he's afraid they will go an' peach on him. When he see them come here, terday, he jest slipped in an' hired me ter do the job, an' I got your help. But there may be more in it. We may get another haul from Steve, ef we once get on the right road. Now, we must hev them. Tom, go up an' get two more lights."

Tom started.

"That will do us up, Phin!" whispered Billy.

"Sure!"

"What be we ter do?"

"I hev hid here as long as I want ter. We must git a wiggle on, as say say, an' git out ef we hev ter fight."

"Right you be, old man. Now, I have a plan."

"What?"

"Can't we go up the same way we come down?"

"How kin we?"

"Put this box which we hev here right under the trap, an' then go up, b'jinks!"

Phin caught eagerly at the plan. Neither of them was stupid enough to think this was a promising scheme, but when there was no way which was promising, something had to be tried if it was not of that nature. As softly as possible they moved, and the box

was conveyed to the desired point without creating any alarm.

The next work was even more difficult. What if the trap was fastened?

The Bowery boy's heart was heavy as Phin helped him up, and Billy wavered as he put his hands against the trap-door and pushed. What would come next?

Steadily he raised.

The door rose!

Light streamed in from the room above.

The danger so much dreaded was not to confront them, but others came. They were not the only ones who saw the light. A sudden exclamation from the stairs told that the men there were wide awake.

"They are gettin' out!"

"Jump fer your life!" It was Phin who spoke and he gave Billy a push with all the vigor of his strong arms, and the Bowery boy was sent to the floor above as if by some irresistible force. Then it was Phin's turn.

If left alone he would not have found it difficult, and when Billy seized his shoulders and pulled hard all looked promising, but something was in the way of success, for muscular arms were twisted around Phin's legs, and his progress was checked abruptly. The men below were getting in their work.

"Come on!" cried Billy, tugging with all his power.

"The skunks hev got me by the legs!" cried the Yankee, in his wrath.

"Kick yourself loose!"

"Kick your grandmother! The critters won't let me! The thieves are pullin' of me down!" howled the log-driver. "Hang on, Billy; hang on! Oh good Lordy! I do believe I shall be quartered!"

Phin really thought all he alleged. He had the weight of two men dangling from his legs, and all his endeavors and those of the young ally barely served to keep him up.

The log-driver from Maine was furious. Confident in his own strength he felt like defying his foes, but this he could not do as he was then situated.

"Look out!" cried Billy, suddenly. "You're fallin'!"

CHAPTER IX.

BILLY AND PHIN GET A SCARE

"So I be! Good-by!"

Thus spoke Phineas, and at the last word he released his hold and disappeared in the cellar. Billy was aghast. The fall of his ally was sudden and unexpected, and as the boy looked down into the cellar, where, by the way, he could see little or nothing, he did not have his wits about him as usual.

Phin was in the grasp of the crooks. What was Billy's duty in the case? Would it be best to go to his aid, or hasten out of the house for police aid?

"Here I be! Come an' see me! How do ye like that snifter in the nose? How was that? One more fer luck! Whoop! Take a sample o' Skowhegan style!"

It was the voice of Phineas down in the cellar, and Billy forgot to reason. Following the dictates of that impulse common to all brave persons he leaped to the aid of his ally.

He managed to alight on his feet. Then he looked around for a chance to give Phin some help, but all he could see was his friend standing composedly at one side.

"Where be they?" cried the Bunco Bouncer.

"Wal, ef you sift the dirt you may be able ter find them in it!" calmly explained Mr. Prat of Skowhegan!

"Do ye mean—"

"I mean I hev give both on 'em a capsizze, an' they is laid out like bruised logs after a drive."

"Have you done 'em up?"

"I've done them down, an' knocked them

down, an' trod all over them in patent style. Gosh all hemlocks! I've give them a sample o' Somerset county style, an' ther beauties lay like dead snakes!"

"Phin, you're a trump, but we can't stop ter say so. Up, man; up an' out o' this afore the other feller brings help!"

"I feel like lickin' the whole gang, but I s'pose your way is best. Lemme give ye a hist, Billy boy!"

Once more Billy was raised to the floor above, and this time there was no opposition to Phin's following.

From the room they passed quickly to the hall, and, finding the front door once more unlocked, they were soon in the street.

Both felt like taking revenge for the trouble they had endured, but the shadow of Happy Harry's death was over them, and they did not dare to complain to the police. They were talking of this when a new scare came on that very subject.

A patrolman and a roundsman passed at a slow walk, and a few words of their conversation were caught by the listeners.

"It is just the chance for some smart fellow to make his reputation," remarked the latter. "The description sent out is very accurate, and it ought to be possible to recognize the criminals. They may come on your beat, Maginnis, so have your eyes propped open and see everybody. If you get them you will not only avenge Happy Harry's murder, but get a show for promotion, yourself."

"Oh! you bet I'll watch!" replied the patrolman.

"The recognition should be easy. I suppose the boy is about the size of that one."

They had passed slightly by Phin and Billy, and the speaker jerked his thumb over his shoulder as he spoke. The patrolman stopped and looked at Billy fully.

"We're gone up!" muttered Phin, in dismay.

"That kid ain't the one," said the patrolman, shaking his head.

"Of course not."

"Let that kid go to any hotel an' he would not be allowed ter go up to any room. Why, he has a face so homely he would scare the chambermaids into fits if they saw him."

He raised his voice as he spoke, and the richness of his remark so impressed the roundsman that both officers had a hearty laugh as they resumed their way.

"Darn my boots ef that ain't a perlite way o' speakin' of a feller-bein'!" quoth Billy, in disgust. "Say, Phin, be I so thunderin' homely as he says? Ef so, I had better git a base-ball mask an' wear it ter keep the goats from chewin' me."

"Never mind; let's skip!" hastily advised Phin.

"What's the hurry?"

"Them chaps are lookin' fer the man an' the boy who went inter the hotel where Harry Hudson was killed."

"Let 'em look; they wouldn't find us ef we went an' pulled their noses. Recognize us? Bah! They ain't built that way!"

"Wal, I'm goin' home right off, quick!"

"Not yet."

"I say yes; go, an' do it sudden. Don't ye think I ever want ter look on the hills an' valleys of old Somerset ag'in? There would be a pile o' mournin' goods ordered fer this year ef Phin Pratt was never ter see the gals up that way ag'in, by gosh!"

As usual, Billy overcame his friend's fears, and they wandered on in company, though Phin kept a sharp watch and was ready to run if he saw an officer looking at him with more attention than seemed natural.

Suddenly a voice pronounced Billy's name. They were in front of an undertaker's establishment, and the proprietor stood in the doorway.

"Are you busy, Billy?" he inquired.

"Not especial."

"Will you do me a favor?"

"I reckon so. What is it?"

"Stay in my shop for half an hour while I am away. I want to go out, and do not wish to leave the alone. Some customer might come in, you know."

"We'll stay, an' welcome."

"Good! I'll ask you to take the rear room. Thus, as you will not be visible, you will invite no transient in, while if anybody really desires to see me you can come out to answer them, and say I will return shortly."

"Correct! Toddle along about yer errand, an' you'll find us here when you put in a reappearance."

The undertaker went his way, while the substitutes sat down in the rear room. Phin surveyed one thing with apprehension.

"Say, d'yee see all o' them coffins?" he asked.

"I do that same."

"Nice things fer us ter set alongside of, by gosh!"

"Be you afraid?"

"I don't lack much on't, I admit. Ef there's any one thing I don't like it is dead folks, an' coffins is about as bad. Jest now, sech things hit me worse than usual, Ye see, my nerves ain't never got over seein' Harry Hudson layin' behind the bed up in the hotel."

"Does he haunt ye so?"

"Comes mighty near it."

"Wal, this ain't the hotel."

"Ef it was you wouldn't ketch me around the establishment. Say, what is that one coffin propped up in the middle o' the room fer, when all the rest are at one side?"

"My guess would be that there was some one in it."

"Thunder an' lightnin'!"

Phin almost flew into the air, so suddenly did he spring from his chair, and his frightened expression made Billy smile.

"Don't be so took down," the Bunco Bouncer advised. "Nobody will hurt ye, be he dead or 'live, an' I don't know that there is any one in the coffin. I'll look!"

Billy moved forward and took off the cloth cover. The upper part of the coffin lid was not on. He gazed, and then Phin saw him start back with more trepidation than he had ever before witnessed in the cool lad.

"What is it?" the man from Maine inquired, anxiously.

"Come an' see," replied Billy, in a hushed voice.

Phin stepped forward, looked and then uttered a cry of dismay.

CHAPTER X.

FACING A POLICE MAGNATE.

PHIN PRATT turned to rush out of the room.

"Stop! Where are you goin'?" demanded Bowery Billy.

"I'm goin' home, by gosh! an' goin' as quick as my legs will carry me!" declared Phin, in a panic.

"Wait!"

"What! with that thing in there? I guess not!"

"I tell ye to hold on!"

"Say Billy do ye know who that dead man is?"

"Yes."

"It's Happy Harry, the man folks think we killed!"

"That's true, but should you be scared about it?"

"Wal, by gosh! ef you'll tell me why I shouldn't be scared, I'll agree ter stay with ye here as long as ye say."

"Done, old man! I admit that I was all shook up when I first gazed in, but, now, my wits git ter workin', I see how foolish I was. Harry is dead an' can't harm us, an' nobody else is nere—"

"They may come at any minute."

"True as you live, but it ain't at all likely they will. You see, all this shows that the coroner must hev set on the deceased, an' now the body is handed over ter my frien', the undertaker, fer burial. The paper said no frien's o' the dead man was known yet, an' he may hev ter go ter Potter's Field. Here the body is, but did you ever see any more harmless thing? He may have been a law-breaker in life, but now he is only one o' us poor, weak human critters come ter his end. Don't be scared of him. We didn't do him up!"

The argument had due effect upon Phineas, who now felt somewhat ashamed of his fears, and not inclined to run so precipitously.

"You are about right, an' I'll stay until the undertaker comes back. Cover up the face, Billy! So this is the end o' the man who stole my wallet on the train!"

"Be you sure it was him who did it?"

The log-driver hesitated.

"I won't say I be, though I felt sure of it at one time. It may hev been some one else. Anyhow, there wasn't much cash in the wallet, an' ef it was this man, I forgive him; I do, sure ez you live! Why, he may have an old mother, somewhere, Billy!"

"Fer her sake, I hope not, Phin."

"It would be a hard blow. He went wrong, I guess, be the thief who he may, an' it would kill a good mother. Death is always harsh on the nerves o' the livin', ef the situation is never so good. It may be worse on him who dies, ef he dies in sin. I don't know. I hope we shall all bring up at the good place, but it behooves a feller to have a clean record when he passes over the river."

Phineas had not fully recovered from his shock. It made him gloomy, and he preferred to talk, too, rather than sit in silence and think of the thing in the casket.

He was interrupted in his remarks. Footsteps sounded in the other room, and Billy rose.

"Either the boss is back, or he has a customer."

He was about to open the connecting door when some one else did it before him. Two men entered. Billy had expected to see the undertaker, but that person was not there. The foremost man was not recognized by the Bowery boy, while the second kept somewhat back, and was partially obscured for the time being by the fact that the light was dim where he stood.

The leading visitor looked around and then asked:

"Where is Seekins?"

"Gone out fer about five minutes," returned Billy.

"Is he sure to return as soon as that?"

"I reckon he is."

"Very well; that will do. Will you sit down, Marchant?"

Both Billy and Phin had been looking anxiously at the second man, impressed with the belief, despite the dimness of the light, that they had seen him before. Now, the name was equal to a flood of illumination. There was a discovery, and it came to both with telling force—indeed, Phin almost fell off his chair.

Marchant was the clerk at the hotel where Happy Harry had been murdered!

The two friends exchanged glances of alarm. Here they had been trying to keep out of the sight of men who had never seen them, fearing they would be discovered by the published descriptions, and now they had to face the clerk who had directed them to Happy Harry's room that eventful day—the very man who had furnished the description!

To the last words the clerk replied:

"I am not tired, Mr. Superintendent."

"Let us look at the dead man once more."

The speaker removed the cloth. Only he seemed interested in seeing what was there.

The hotel clerk stood near the door—between the two friends and the way to safety.

"Poor Harry!" murmured the superintendent. "He came to a short end and did not wholly deserve it. He was not the worst person in the world, but his own worst enemy. Weakness, not viciousness, carried him to what evil he did. He was of too social a nature—too happy-go-lucky. He got his nickname of Happy Harry in that way, and the same quality carried him on to this sad end."

"Say, who is that feller who seems ter know so much?" asked the log-driver, in an awed voice.

"It will alarm ye to be told, I'm thinkin'."

"Worse than sight o' that blamed clerk?"

"Yes."

"Impossible! Fire it out! I'm willin' ter admit I'm afraid o' him, but then, I kin stand it. Fire away!"

"Brace up so as ter take it cool. When I recognized him it took my breath away. Do you see to it you don't give yerself away. Phin, that man is the superintendent of police!"

Phin almost dropped to the floor. His eyes seemed to grow several sizes too large for their sockets, and his ruddy face lost much of its color. He did not know the system of New York's division of police titles, but he was wise enough understand that this fine-looking man was at the head of all.

"We are gone up!" he gasped.

"Softly, Phin! Don't let them hear you. You see we are not suspected. Keep up yer grit an' all will be wal, I do believe."

Billy left the side of his friend. He knew it was not prudent to carry on conversation, and that the lightest way of dealing with the emergency was the best.

An emergency it surely was, for, with the hotel clerk and the superintendent there, they two were in vital danger. Thus far the clerk had scarcely given them a glance, but if he did so, and his memory was at all good, he would be sure to recognize them unless their faces had faded wholly from his memory.

Strange, indeed, was the situation when they, the dead man, the clerk and the superintendent were thus thrown together.

The latter looked awhile at the silent member of the party and then turned to Billy.

"Come here!" he directed.

The Bowery boy obeyed, promptly.

"This man," added the police official, indicating the lifeless form, "was once a young person like you. He had a chance to take whatever road in life he preferred. He could go right or wrong. He chose to go wrong, and he did so. He chose evil company and fell lower and lower. His life became a ruin. What is left of him now? He is dead, and there is no one to mourn for him. His relatives, if he has any, and he doubtless has—we do not know, for his real name is not, perhaps, known to us—have been alienated from him by his evil ways. At the hour of death he is here, alone!"

The superintendent paused, and Billy, feeling he was expected to say something, commented;

"Hard lines!"

"You are right. He was murdered, and as he had no friends to interfere, he is likely to go to the Potter's Field now. The inquest has been held; no more is to be done with him but to carry him away to his last home, unhonored and unmourned."

"Tough on him!"

"It is, indeed. Remember his case as you grow older. Keep to the right, my boy; *keep to the right!*"

It was a kind warning, and Billy was impressed by the words from such a source. The warning was not needed, for he had no inclination to be a law-breaker, but he wondered what the superintendent would say if he knew he was talking with one of the pair

for whom his subordinates were searching so zealously.

"I'm sorry fer him," remarked Billy, again feeling that he ought to say something.

"Harry wasn't the worst man in the world," added the hotel clerk. "I don't think he ever did any actual crime, himself, but he went to the dogs by keeping bad company, and two men who were responsible for it were Lane and Steve Slim."

Bowery Billy made a sudden start.

CHAPTER XI.

PHIN SEEKS FOR HIS MONEY.

BILLY had an idea. The association of names struck him with telling force. Steerer Steve was charged with having lured Harry Hudson along the road to ruin. Billy knew Steve was a villain, and, as the other fact was thus presented to him, the Bowery boy had an idea.

Somebody had killed Harry. Who?

Was it Steve Slim?

It was a startling notion, and it put Billy on his mettle. That day Steve's tools had brought danger to the boy and his ally. This made him an avowed enemy, and they had a grudge to settle. If Steve had killed Harry, what better way was there of squaring the account than to prove the fact?

The superintendent took up the conversation and asked the hotel clerk:

"You remember the man and the boy we are seeking as the murderers of Happy Harry. Are you sure they never visited Harry at the hotel before the fatal occasion?"

"I never saw them before," answered the clerk.

"You might have forgotten them."

"I never forget a face."

"How old should you say the boy was?"

"About fifteen."

"You say he was something like five feet, five, tall. Let me test your skill in guessing on height. How tall is this youth?"

He pointed to Billy.

"Oh! five feet two," returned the clerk, knowingly.

"Here is the undertaker's measure. We will see. Young man, kindly let us measure you, for we are looking for a murderer, and it may help us a good deal."

"Certain!"

Billy was very cheerful, and though Phin was greatly worried, the measurement was made.

"Five three," announced the superintendent.

"I was within an inch!" exclaimed the clerk, in triumph.

"A very good guess. So the boy who took part in the killing is two inches taller than this one?"

"Yes."

"How about general build?"

"The other one was stouter."

"And the man in the case? How would he compare with this gentleman?" and the officer pointed to Phin.

"This one is a dead ringer for the other; they look as much alike as two peas."

Perspiration started out on poor Phin's forehead.

"I'm a goner!" he thought.

"Are you sure they are not one and the same?" asked the superintendent, with a smile.

"Oh! of course. The likeness is only general. This man hasn't so keen a cast of countenance."

Phin would willingly have been pronounced a fool at that moment, in order to have suspicion averted. The slight passed unheeded, and the leading speakers let the matter rest where it was. But Mr. Pratt seized the chance to address Billy in secret.

"Say, I shall have ter bid ye good-by fer now," he remarked. "I've got a bad pain in my stomach, an' I want ter go to an

apotheary shop an' git them ter mix me up some catnip tea, ef they kin."

"Stay where you are, Phin. We are not suspected, an' the best way is ter bluff et out."

"I would jest ez soon ez not, fer this is a pile o' fun ter me, but this pain in my stomach is jest excruciating, by gosh!"

Billy smiled. He knew the pain was bogus, and that Phin was simply a very badly scared man. Luckily, both were relieved from danger by the return of the undertaker. He seemed the center of interest, and the Bowery boy and his ally lost no time in getting out of the place.

Phin fell to mopping away the perspiration from his forehead.

"You see we are all right," observed Billy.

"All right? Wal, so was John Rogers, after he was burned at the stake. It was the burnin' that was uncomfortable fer him. An' ef I ain't been tortured in there you kin kiek me fer a fool. Why, it was an escape so narrer that the starch is all melted in my collar, by gum!"

"Phin, I have an idea!"

"What is it?"

"What ef it was Steerer Steve who killed Harry Hudson?"

"Eh?"

"Ain't it possible?"

"He is skunk enough ter do it, but why do ye think it did happen so?"

Billy was eager to tell, and he soon made known the grounds for his suspicions. He could give no absolute evidence, but when a man wishes to be convinced it is not hard to convince him. It was so with Phineas, and he explosively exclaimed:

"You have hit the nail on the head, by gum! There ain't a bit o' doubt on the subject. We'll go right ter the constable an' tell him so."

"Without any proof? Go slow, old man; go slow. We hev our theory, but ef we's ter spring it without proof we shouldn't be in it at all. Now, here is a chance fer us ter git in our fine work. We'll turn detectives an' see ef we kin run Steve down."

"Hooray! I'm yer huckleberry!"

"You are with me?"

"With ye? Gosh all hemlocks! you bet I be! Go in! Wal, rather! An' I'll bet we succeed so wal we shall git appointed constables in place o' that feller who felt so bad 'cause Harry was dead."

Phin's erratic temperament was on a new line of action; he had forgotten his fears, and was willing to do anything rash so long as it promised to get Steve into trouble.

During the rest of the day, however, there was no startling development. The approach of night brought another interesting era in their affairs. In spite of all Billy's urging to the contrary, Phin proposed to go and meet the representative of Dulaney & Jones Brothers, and his zeal was spurred on by a note from Mr. Rollo Dulaney, telling him all was ready for the exchange of the big English fortune for the Maine man's five hundred dollars.

Billy warned the log-driver in vain, for he was much interested. His belief that Phin had been dealing with a bunco gang was strengthened by the fact that Mr. Pratt had specific directions to visit his "lawyer" alone. For this the reason was given that it was unsafe to have any confidant when one was to handle large sums of money, but the excuse did not satisfy Billy.

"Wal, ef you will go, there is just one thing I want ter say—look out fer yerself, an' don't blame me ef you come home a plucked pigeon."

"William, you mean wal, but I tel' ye Rollo Dulaney is as square a feller as you kin find in New York. I'll bring home a pile o' bills as large as your head, an' then we'll see who the laugh is on."

"But you'll be careful?"

"I will, an' I'll remember all you've told me."

"Especially, about the panel game."

"Yes; they don't substitute no bogus money on me ef I once git my peepers on the good."

Billy had done his best, and he had to be content and see Phin go to meet his "lawyer."

The man from Skowhegan had been stubborn outwardly, and in reality, but he was not so stubborn as to want to lose his five hundred dollars. A more serious mood came over him when he had gone along the street a distance, and he muttered.

"It's jest possible that the boy maybe right. He's a sharp, knowin' lad, an' he's a New Yorker; he ought ter be up ter sech things. I will be uncommon careful!"

It was not far to the residence of Rollo Dulaney, lawyer. This was a brick house which had always been plain, but had grown rusty, now, with the passage of time. Phin rung the bell and waited anxiously.

CHAPTER XII.

CUNNING AGAINST CUNNING.

THE door was soon opened. The girl who did this part of the work was clean and trim-looking, and Mr. Pratt was encouraged. He had a susceptible mind, and he thought that such a girl would not be in league with law-breakers.

He asked to see Mr. Dulaney, and was escorted to a room on the second floor and told to wait until the servant went to the "lawyer." She went out, was gone about five minutes, and then returned with the report:

"Mr. Dulaney is now busy with a client in a case where much money is involved, but will see you in a very short time."

Phineas was encouraged still further.

"Ef he was crooked he would rush right here," was his line of reasoning. "He is with another client, an' he must be on the square. Ha! won't I have the laugh on Billy, though?"

This anticipation was so agreeable that Phin laughed then and there. He felt of the five hundred dollars in his pocket, and imagined how big a roll the ten thousand would make.

"Won't I cut a dash at Skowhegan, when I git home!" he thought, with a chuckle.

He was in the seventh heaven of joy and confidence, and at that moment all of Billy's warning was forgotten. Phin was ready to yield up his cash to a stranger as completely as ever victim of bunco man did.

Footsteps sounded outside the door. The latter opened and a man entered. He was rather a handsome young fellow, and faultlessly dressed in sober black. He also wore a winning smile—a smile which would have turned vinegar to honey, if such a thing had been possible under any condition. The smile expanded; he advanced with extended hand; and in dulcet tones he explained:

"I am the gentleman you wish to see. My dear Mr. Pratt, I am delighted to meet you at last, and exceedingly regret that pressing legal business deferred it last night. Pray be seated, and at your ease; I am Rollo Dulaney, Esquire."

A part of this address had been because he thought the visitor was flurried by being in such exalted company. He judged by Phin's expression. Phin did look different from common. He was staring at Mr. Dulaney in an odd way, and there was good cause.

No stranger to him was the dulcet-voiced "lawyer." He had seen him before, if Dulaney had not seen Phin.

It was none other than Lane, the confidence man who had been told to "move on" by the Bowery policeman, and the avowed ally and confederate of Steve Slim!

Never before had Phineas received such a shock.

It was not singular that he stared oddly

at the bland entrappor of men. He was no fool, and no one else would have failed under the circumstances to realize the truth. His dream of English money faded away, and he saw at once that Billy had not warned him without good cause. The "lawyer" was no lawyer, but, beyond question, was now seeking to ply his trade as a bunco man.

Down went Phin's hopes.

"Please be seated," repeated Dulaney.

"Yes, sir."

It was a very weak voice to emanate from a big man, and Dulaney began to be puzzled.

"I trust you are not ill?" he asked.

Phin made an effort to "pull himself together."

"It flusters me to think o' all the money comin' ter me," he explained.

"Oh! that is nothing," replied Dulaney, with a smile. "There is not a week but I pass over to the proper claimants just such amounts as the one you have secured. I feel that I am doing good in this work," added the speaker, waxing eloquent, "Above all things I am a genuine American; I love our country and its glory, and it does me good to secure these claims. Every dollar brought from England to this country is so much gained."

Phin drew a long breath. He had been allowed time to get control of his nerves. He knew he was dealing with a swindler, and was not only prepared to meet him, but was about as angry a man as ever stood in Rollo Dulaney's presence.

"I shall be glad ter get my cash," he answered.

"You shall have it at once. Wait, and I will get it from the safe."

He went out, and Phin had time to form his plans. When the bunco man returned he bore a large package. This he proceeded to free from its wrapper, and Phil caught the gleam of greenback paper.

"Examine it," blandly requested Rollo.

The man from Maine obeyed. He believed himself to be a good judge of money, and investigation convinced him that, though he could not stop to survey every bill therein, there were many that were genuine.

"Little did your distant English cousin think, when he was accumulating this, that he was going to enrich you," remarked Rollo, with a guileless smile.

"Folks don't always know how money transactions is goin' to turn out," replied Phineas.

"Ha! ha! That is so. Ha! ha!"

Esquire Dulaney seemed to find something very amusing about the remark of his visitor. His laugh had a more sincere ring than anything he had said.

He allowed Phineas to look to his fill, and then added:

"Here is a small hand-bag which I will give you to carry the money home in. You will attract less attention than if you had a package."

The money was put in the article named; the hand-bag was closed, and then set on the table.

"I suppose you brought the five hundred dollars," he went on, with his guileless smile growing more bland.

"Oh! yes; here it is."

Phineas produced the roll which he had hoped would buy so much prosperity for him.

Dulaney counted it rapidly.

"Quite right! Now, friend Pratt, do you know what I am going to do with all this cash?"

"No."

"I am going to put it all out to pay off the mortgage on the house of a poor widow on this block who—Step to the window and I will show you where she lives."

He led the way, and Phineas followed obediently. Dulaney pointed down the

street and began to talk volubly about the widow and her financial troubles. Phin listened patiently, but he did more. Covertly he watched the hand-bag on the table, and his watch was not in vain.

He saw a panel move in the seemingly solid wall: he saw a hole appear there, instead; he saw a hand reach out and grasp the hand-bag. Then he lost all interest in the widow.

With a cat-like bound he regained the vicinity of the money, and, just as the hand-bag was disappearing through the hole in the wall, he laid hold of it himself, and wrested it away from the thief.

Through the hole he then saw the other man, and the sight was worth a good deal.

He recognized Steve Slim!

Rollo Dulaney was dumfounded. His plot had to all appearances been working well, and the sudden change was both surprising and alarming. For a moment he could not recover his breath, but when he did, the viciousness of his nature came to the front.

"What are you doing?" he cried, sharply.

"Holdin' on ter my property!" clearly explained Phineas.

"Why do you leap about like a madman?"

"Somebody tried to steal it."

"Nonsense!"

"Is it? Look at this hole in the wall, ef ye think so. Yes, an' look at me, too, by gum! Do I look like a feller that can be took in by bunco chaps? Ef you think I do, try it on!"

CHAPTER XIII.

A DESPERATE SITUATION.

ROLLO DULANEY's face was the picture of dismay and rage. The speech of the man from Maine was plain and to the point, but the sharper was reluctant to resort to violent measures while mild ones might possibly answer.

"What do you mean by such wild words?" he demanded.

"I mean that you are a bunco man, but you can't take me in!" concisely added Phineas.

"Why, are you crazy?"

"Better fer you that I was, but I happen ter know all about you, Mr. Dulaney, alias Lane, the sport. Yes, an' I know all about Mr. Steve Slim, too!"

The die was cast. Rollo saw he had caught a Tartar, and he delayed decisive action no longer. Moving toward Phin, he exclaimed:

"Drop that hand-bag!"

"Drop it? Why you told me ter take et home with me."

"All we have said before is off. You have seen fit to kick over the traces, and you will take the consequences. Drop it!"

"Not much! As fer you, mister, you keep away from me or I'll lick the stuffin' out o' you! D'y'e hear that, you blamed bunco skunk?"

Rollo drew a revolver.

"Obey me or you are a dead man!" he cried, sharply.

Things began to look bad for Phin. He had abundant muscle, but muscle goes for nothing when opposed to a revolver, the weapon which makes the weak the equal of the strong under any condition. Phin was not slow to realize his danger, but he remained cool.

"Say, ain't I bought this thing?" he asked.

"You accuse me of being a swindler, so you can't expect me to have any regard for the bargain."

"I don't," frankly replied the log-driver.

"You are right: I have no such regard."

"How about my five hundred dollars?"

"It is now mine, and I shall keep it!" calmly declared Dulancy.

"Got this all planned, ain't ye?"

"I have."

"An' I ain't got a word ter say?"

"No. All you have to do is to git, and see that you lose no time about it. *Git!*"

Plucky Phin was determined to stand up for his rights if he died for it. If he could have got his hands on Dulaney without receiving a shot from the dreaded revolver he would not have asked odds of any one, but he knew the attempt would cost him his life. He could think of but one other scheme, and he proceeded to put it into execution.

His hand was still on the hand-bag, and now, with a quick movement he swung the latter from the table, and with the same movement he hurled it with all his force at the head of the bunco man.

Rollo Dulaney had been in his line of "business" for many years, but past experience had not prepared him for such an attack. He had found in the past that a revolver would quell the bravest of his victims who were not taken in by the "panel" trick, and this confidence was so shared by Steerer Steve that, though the ally was still in the next room, he did not dream his aid would be needed.

Like a flash went the hand-bag, and the aim was true. It struck Dulaney full in the face, with the result that he measured his length on the floor, his revolver flying away to the distance of several feet.

Then the plucky Phin showed his agility once more, for he secured the pistol, and, though the bunco man made a surprisingly quick rise, he found the revolver bearing upon him.

The man from Maine tucked the hand-bag under one arm and grimly surveyed his foe.

"Mister," he spoke, "I'll trouble you to pass over that five hundred you owe me!"

"Eh?"

Dulaney was bewildered.

"Fork over, or I'll blow you inter Aroostock county!"

"But that will be murder."

"I've killed fifteen men in my time," asserted Phineas, unblushingly, "an' I am jest hankerin' fer a chance ter make it sixteen. Fork over or die!"

There was a sound at the panel in the wall, but Phin gave the locality but one glance. The panel was not large enough for a man to put his head through, and as he was not in range, now, he had little fear of a shot from that quarter—the only way to do him damage.

Dulaney's head began to clear, but Phin did not intend to let him have opportunity to plan out and execute any new scheme.

"Do I see ye movin'?" he demanded.

"My man, I will compromise with you—"

"I'll bet a yoke of oxen you won't!"

"For the last time, fork over! Toss that roll o' bills down at my feet, or your marm will mourn the loss o' her pet child! *Drop it!*"

The big log-driver from Skowhegan could look fierce when he tried. He looked fierce now, and the bunco man decided that he must obey. Inwardly swelling with savage hate and anger he cast the five hundred dollars down as directed, and Phin gathered in his almost-lost cash.

"Now," added Dulaney, mildly, "I will trouble you for the gripsack, you know."

"It won't be no trouble."

"I am glad of that."

"It won't be no trouble, fer you won't get it! I keep all I hev got, an' your carpet-bag goes with me ter Somerset county ez a reminder. Mister, I must hev something to remember you by."

"But my money is in it!"

"So it is."

"You won't keep that?"

"Yes, I shall."

"But you have your own cash, and it wouldn't be right to keep mine, you know."

"Oh! you pretty bird! but ain't you a nice one to preach right an' wrong! You

gosh-darned old skinflint of a bunco shark, ef you think ye kin bluff me you are away off from the road. Yes, sirree, findin's are keepin's, an' all I have I hang on to. *Git out o' my way!*"

The man from Maine took a step toward the door, and Dulancy moved aside like one in a dream. Was the victory won? Not yet, and Phin was not foolish enough to think so.

In order to go out he would have to pass in the line of vision of the bunco confederate in the next room, and if Steerer Steve was wise enough to use his advantage, and desperate enough to take human life, he could prevent Phin from ever reaching the door—prevent him with a revolver-shot.

Phin was worried. He had been reared where all disputes were settled in what he considered the only manly way—with muscle—and he was not used to firearms as a means to such an end.

He had a horror of bullets, and was more scared than he would have admitted at the idea of being made a target of by Steve, the boss crook.

Yet, there was no way out, and he made the venture. Toward the door he went with his gaze fixed on the now-closed panel, expecting at every moment to see it open. Was he to be shot down like a Somerset county Christmas turkey? Horrible thought! His blood seemed to chill as he watched. Life was sweet. Was he to lose it at the hands of such a knave?

Creak!

The door opened before he reached there, and Steerer Steve stood in the passage.

Phineas was looking into the wicked eye of a revolver, held in the second bunco man's hand, but it was a positive relief. Better than a shot from ambush, as one from the panel might be considered. Steve squared away for action.

"Stop where you are!" he ordered.

"Did you speak?" retorted Phin.

"I did, and I mean it."

"What hev you ter do with this game?"

"I will show you. You big brawling country lout, if you imagine you can run this show your are mistaken. You are dealing with men who know their business, and don't you forget it! Drop all you have there, or I will blow your head off!"

"What will I be doin' all the while?" retorted Phin.

"Nothing. You are not in it in any sense of the word. Why, we New Yorkers could do up a regiment of such yokels as you!"

"Could, could ye? Wal, this carrion crow has jest tried it. How did he come out?"

"You took an advantage of him. Now, the advantage is all on the other side. We are two against one, and we will show you no mercy. Drop that hand-bag!"

"I won't!"

"Drop it, or I will shoot you full of holes!"

"Shoot away, dang you!"

Phin was defiant, but he did not fail to see that he was in great danger. The odds were against him, and he was well aware that he had to deal with brawny men. He had beaten them so far, but the rest did not look easy. He wished he had taken Billy's advice and kept away from the danger.

CHAPTER XIV.

PHIN GOES DOWN; SOMEBODY ELSE COMES UP.

ROLLO DULANEY spoke sharply.

"We lose time by dallying with this man. Take the thing into your own hands and end it!"

Steerer Steve once more addressed Phin:

"Drop that hand-bag!"

The man from Maine had been doing some thinking. He had made up his mind that

nothing could avert a fight, and that it was best to be the aggressor. He had always lived in a law-abiding community, and though he felt that he ought to use the revolver which he held, and use it without compunction, he could not bring himself to do what might make him the taker of human life. Thus, he resorted to the one way of an honest man and acted accordingly.

With a mighty leap he sprung upon Steve, whose revolver was disregarded, and the log-driver relied only on his muscle.

Not so with Steve. Murder was something he abhorred only on account of possible consequences, and, as he was now mad all through, he did not let that interfere with his plans.

He pulled the trigger, and the bullet sped so close to Phin's head that he almost thought he had been hit. It was a single chance in many that he was not, but escape the shot he did. He was left for action.

His big hands were outstretched to seize the Steerer, but if Phin was alert, so was another man. Dulaney had been watching keenly, and at the first sign of a move on the Maine man's part he moved, too, and just as Phin was about to lay hold of Steve a foot was projected and the assailant stumbled, reeled and fell in a heap.

Another moment and both crooks had piled upon him.

"We have the demon!" cried Dulaney, exultantly.

Right there he miscalculated. They had to deal with one as strong as an ox, and the result was soon seen. They had Phin down, but there was a movement like the surge of the ocean, and Phin's arms and legs began to fly.

"Gol-darn ye!" howled the log-driver, "I'll make mince-meat o' ye ef you don't let me up! Take that, you measly skunk! Git off my stomach, or I'll smash yer ter kindlin' wood!"

Brave was the visitor from Skowhegan, and the battle began to look doubtful. The crooks saw they could not hold him down, and as this fact was impressed on their minds they looked for other means. Both revolvers had gone flying away, but Dulaney recovered one and suddenly clapped it to Phin's head.

"Give in!" he cried. "Give in or you die!"

"Never!"

"Then take it!"

Dulaney really meant to fire, but he had waited just a trifle too long.

"Drop that shooter!"

It was a new voice which made the demand, and there was a blow which sent the weapon flying far away. The second revolver was not so distant, and it seemed scarcely a moment of time before it was presented to Dulaney's own head, and the new voice added:

"Dry up or you are a dead duck!"

There was a lull. All looked up.

"Billy!" shouted Phin, "the Bowery boy for a hand full!"

"Billy it is!" coolly returned the Bunco Bouncer. "What's all this friction about? B'jinks! ef you fellers don't let up, an' show some pride in good government, I'll cut the whole gang up fer hash!" and he tried to look vicious, but, really, he was inclined to laugh, for the three men looked comical enough as they lay sprawling on the floor.

Phin hurriedly rose, and the crooks would have done the same thing had not Billy interfered.

"Lay right where you be!" he ordered.

"Say, let me lick them silly!" requested Phineas.

"No. All we want is ter git out. Pack up, old man, an' we will get a wiggle on."

The log-driver sprung for the hand-bag.

"I protest," began Dulaney; but, Billy interrupted him.

"How much?"

"Eh?"

"Enough o' protest so you want a cop called in?"

"Jest let me git up and talk—"

"Lay right where you be!" and the revolver enforced the order.

It was a humiliating situation. To lie on the floor and see an enemy in his hour of triumph is something no man could do with composure. Yet, the bunco men saw they must grovel in the dust and keep out of danger of the revolver.

Phin hugged the hand-bag.

"I'm all ready ter go," he answered.

"Wait!" cried Dulaney, imploringly. "Let us hev our own property and I will not say a word. Give me the hand-bag and you can go scot free, but that is property."

"Phin, do you want ter keep it?"

"Sartain, Billy."

"Then you can. Gents, so-long, an' pleasant dreams—"

"Would you rob us? We protest—"

"Shall I call a policeman?"

"No, but there is such a thing as right—"

"You gosh-darned, measly, thievin', sneakin' swindler!" shouted Phineas, "you are a pritty man ter talk about sech things, ain't ye? Thought of all that when you was robbin' me, didn't ye? Wal, when ye git this carpet-bag back jest notify me by mail, will ye?"

"This is talk enough," added Billy. "Go out, old man, an' we will lock these fellers in."

They went, keeping up the watch to the last. Almost as soon as the revolver ceased to cover them the key was turned in the lock. Down the stairs went the allies. Not a word was spoken until they were on the street and the danger to all appearances over. Hastily they walked home. Billy waited patiently for Phin to speak, but, as he did not do so, the boy finally broke the silence. There was a twinkle in his eyes as he observed:

"I s'pose you hev got yer English money in that bag?"

"William," seriously answered the man from Maine, "I am sorry ter say that money existed only in a bunco man's fancy."

"But you have something there?"

"Yes."

"What?"

"The stuff you call green-goods, I guess, but some of it is so interestin'ly green that it has Uncle Sam's munnygram on it, an' ef I ain't got my share o' the plunder I'll sell out. Gosh all fish-hooks! it was the biggest racket I ever heard of. William, how did ye happen ter show up so handy?"

"I feared you would get inter trouble, so I follerred you. When you failed ter come out in what I thought was due time I rung the bell, an' when it was answered I told the girl I had a message fer Dulaney. Told her I was ter deliver it inter his own hands—which I did, as you may remember. Et was a revolver message!"

"William, you are one o' the white hen's chickens, ef she ever had a chick. You've saved my life."

"An' we hev done up the bunco chaps."

"We hev, by gum! Billy, let out another kink an' le's git home as spry as we kin. I want ter see how bad we hev beat them. This carpet-bag is wal stuffed. The question is, how much good money hev we here?"

CHAPTER XV.

THE OUTCAST'S REBUFF.

"B'JINKS! there is our old friend, Jack Olmsted!"

It was afternoon of the day following Phin Pratt's adventure with the bunco men, and he and Billy were in Washington Square when the latter made the exclamation just recorded.

Billy's eyes were always open, and he did not fail to see the young man who had been

dealt with at once so severely and so leniently by Colonel Reymore on the Bowery.

"He looks a trifle more cheerful than he did," remarked the man from Maine.

"Yes, a fraction. Say, I guess he's watchin' fer somebody."

"That's right, I should say. He's scanin' all the folks on the benches, but ef he finds congenial company in them he must be goin' ter the dogs fast. Land sakes alive! what a gang o' tramps they be!"

"Hullo! Jack seems ter have found his pal— Pal! Great guns! I take that back! See who it is!"

"Rosalie Reymore, by gum!"

"Yes. Ha! ha! she ain't so hard on poor Jack as the colonel is. She meets him, an' ef you are any judge o' feminine folks, Phin, you kin see the spirit in which she does it. Wow! see them beam!"

There was a good deal of beaming. Rosalie and Jack had met, and with such a flow of mutual pleasure that their faces told much to the beholders. Jack was in disgrace, but the rich man's daughter was loyal to him, in spite of all.

"They go off one side an' stand in social confab. Wish we could overhear what they have to say."

"Can't we?"

"Possible, but I sorter hate ter act the spy on sech folks."

"By gum! you're right," admitted Phineas. "The man or child who would be mean to sech a person as that angel oughter be kicked from here ter Somerset county, I do declare."

"Then let's watch."

Jack and Rosalie appeared to have something of importance to say. Their joyful manner soon abated, and they began to converse with all the seriousness in the world. Matters of vital import lay heavy on their minds, and this secret interview seemed to mean a good deal to them.

Half an hour passed. During this time Billy and Phin adhered to their resolution not to act the listeners, but they did some thinking. The result appeared when Billy observed:

"Why wouldn't it be a good plan fer us to get acquainted with Mister Jack?"

"Jest what I was thinkin'."

"We'll do it as soon as— Hullo!"

"What?"

"Look over beyond them!"

"Why, it's the old colonel, an' comin' like a ravin' wolf!"

"Hustle nearer, an' let us hear the racket!"

Colonel Reymore, if he did not move like a "ravering wolf," as Phin suggested, did come with long steps and an angry manner. He took the lovers wholly by surprise, and the first warning they had of his presence was when he seized Rosalie roughly and drew her away from her lover. The young couple regarded him in dismay.

"This thing has gone far enough!", declared the colonel.

"Father!" remonstrated Rosalie, feebly.

"What have you to say?"

"Your severity—"

"Severity! Is that what you call it? Is it severity to refuse to let my daughter keep the company of such a reprehensible person as the one you are with?"

"Father, I protest against your harshness to Jack—"

"And I protest against your weakness toward him. Listen to me, girl! You must promise me, here and now, never to speak to Jack Olmsted again."

"I refuse, sir!"

"You do?"

"Respectfully but firmly, I do, sir."

"Girl, you are mad. He is a social outcast, and that he is not in prison is owing to my blameworthy folly and weakness of heart; but this much is sure: If you persist in seeing him I will press the charge of theft, and see him incarcerated without delay."

"Then you will do a most unjust deed."

"Oh! shall I?"

"You will, sir. He never took one thing from your store."

"Then why don't he prove it? I am tired of this weak management of all concerned. He would be in prison if any man but me had conducted affairs. I have been easy, but in so doing I stipulated that you should drop his acquaintance. Now, I find this stolen meeting on."

"Father, Jack is innocent."

"Then why don't the fool prove it?" harshly cried the colonel. "I have begged him to do so; I have let him go unpunished for his crimes; I have been weak and easy; and I have wished as much as any one that he *would* prove his innocence. By Jove! it cuts like a knife to think ill of him! I brought him up; I treated him like an own son, but this has gone too far. Jack Olmsted, are you ready to tell me who the thief was, if, as you claim, it was not you?"

"I cannot, sir," gloomily answered Jack.

"Once more, and for the last time!"

Jack stood silent.

"Enough! There is no more for us to say. Young man, if I find you in the company of my daughter again I will have you arrested for stealing from me. Girl, come with me!"

His strong hand pulled at Rosalie's arm, and she gave way. With a glance to Jack she went along, and the interview was over. The unfortunate cause of all this trouble stood with his hands thrust into his pockets, the image of distress. He was still meditating gloomily, after the Reymore carriage had rolled away with its occupants, when a hand was placed on his shoulder.

"Jack, I want a word with you!"

Olmsted turned suddenly. He saw Billy, but, not having his acquaintance, the recognition did not indicate anything to him.

"Be you in trouble?" added the Bowery boy.

"What is that to you?"

Jack was impatient at being disturbed, and his manner was irritable and sharp as he asked the question.

"Don't be riled up, my frien'. I mean ye no harm, an' it may be we two kin be of value ter each other. Mebbe you have heerd o' me indirect, an' ef you have, you may not be so wishful ter chaw my head off. Rosalie Reymore got inter trouble with a feller named Steve Slim, an' a man an' a kid come ter her help. I was that kid."

Jack's scowl vanished, and he put out his hand quickly.

"I beg your pardon for my rudeness, young man," he said, quickly. "I have heard of you and your noble work. I thank you for what you did. Again I beg your pardon for speaking so sharply. Now, can I aid you in any way?"

"I wanted fer to compare notes."

"In what way?"

"I've had some experience with Steve Slim outside o' that occasion. He's a bunco man, an' he's my enemy. Now, as he's Rosalie's enemy, too, why can't we join forces?"

"What do you wish?"

"What is he annoyin' of her fer?"

"He is not, except that she went to him for information, and he took advantage of her helplessness and tried to abduct her."

"What inflammation did she want?"

"Trace of a missing man."

"Who?"

"Let us call him Harry," replied Jack, after brief hesitation.

Bowery Billy made a sudden start.

"Great guns!" he exclaimed, impressed with a sudden idea.

CHAPTER XVI.

AN IMPORTANT DISCOVERY.

JACK OLNSTED regarded his companion curiously.

"You seem surprised," he remarked. "May I ask why?"

"You say we may call him Harry," Bowery Billy answered. "What else? Harry Who, fer instance?"

"Isn't that enough?"

"I have heard that Rosalie was interested in a feller named Henry Barrington, but it never occurred to me ter call him Harry. If anybody ever does that, what else is there besides Harry?"

"I simply used the term because I did not wish to call Mr. Barrington by his real name. We have addressed him as Harry now and then, but only rarely. There is no other name in connection with him."

"Sure?"

"I never heard of any."

"Haven't I heard that Steve was responsible fer Henry Barrington's fall from grace?"

"Such was the fact, anyhow. Barrington is Colonel Reymore's half-nephew. He has always been a source of care and disappointment to the old gentleman, for he was inclined to be wild. He got in with a fast crowd, of whom Steve was one, though it was not supposed he had as much to do with him as we now know to be the case. He went from bad to worse, and the colonel cast him off some time ago. Rosalie pitied the man for his weakness, and she has never given him up, however."

Bowery Billy had listened with rapt attention.

"Where is Barrington now?"

"That is what Rosalie is trying to learn," answered Jack, gravely. "He has not been seen or heard from for some time, though letters have been sent to him by his faithful cousin. We think he is still under Steve's influence, and we know not what we may hear next?"

"What fer a looker is he?"

"He is of medium height, with slender form, light brown hair, blue eyes and a small, light, light-hued mustache. Why? Do you think you have seen him?"

Billy was afraid he had. He was wondering, now, that he had not before thought to associate Barrington's name with that of another man, and the next question was based on the new suspicion.

"Was he ever called Happy Harry?"

"Not to my knowledge," returned Jack, "though it was a name which would not be inappropriate."

Billy looked down and meditated; then, after a pause, Jack suddenly started and exclaimed:

"Happy Harry! Haven't I heard that name in the last few days?"

"Ef you've read the papers you may hev seen it there."

"Why, it was the name of the man murdered in the hotel!"

"Right ye he, Jack."

"Great heavens! do you mean that it was Henry Barrington?"

"Hold yer hosses, John! I don't say it, an' the notion ain't but just struck me, but it is worth investigatin', mebbe."

"If it is—"

"Wal, what?"

"Never mind, but I must go where we can solve this possibility."

"You shall. I know where the body is, an' the place is a quiet one where you kin look yer fill. I hope et ain't your Henry Barrington, but it looks a trifle bad. Steve is credited with bein' the evil genius of the dead Harry, and things seem to match in the two cases, as fer ez our evidence goes."

"If it should be he!" murmured Jack.

"Would it change things much?"

"Greatly!"

"Especially fer Barrington, eh?"

"I am not sure it would be such a misfortune for that misguided young man. He has been going his evil way until friends and honor are lost, and more of life might

bring more of misdemeanor. It seems a hard thing to say, but death would not be so much of a misfortune as it might seem at first thought."

"Wal, Jack, toddle along with me an' let us see about this."

Phineas was summoned, and the three took their way to the undertaker's establishment. Billy's acquaintance with him was sufficient to gain for him the desired view without any trouble. They were told to go to the other room, and they went without any one to watch or molest.

Billy uncovered the still face.

Jack stood waiting eagerly.

He saw the face and then gave a start.

"It is he!" was the cry.

"Rosalie's cousin?"

"Yes. Henry Barrington it is. And this is the end! Murdered, and forever lost to chance to reform. How horrible is the way of vice!"

It was some time before Jack fully recovered from the shock. The Bowery boy waited patiently, and let Jack re-open the conversation. This he finally did, eagerly:

"I have had too many troubles of my own to follow this matter closely," he said. "Let me ask if the murderer has been found?"

"He ain't," replied Billy.

"Where was Steve when the deed was done?"

"Wal put, John. The same idee is in your noddle that is workin' in my own. Steve hez boasted that he had got a throw-down onter this deceased man. Now, what was the throw-down, ef not the killin' of him?"

"I think you are wrong in this surmise. I believe I know what the throw-down was. Steve aspired to get the favor of Rosalie Reymore—"

"The audacious skunk!"

"And tried to use Barrington to that end. Lost as the latter was to all else that was honorable he would not consent to aid Steve in his scheme. Shortly after, poor Barrington committed a burglary, and put himself the more helplessly in Steve's power. I believe he was put up to it by Steve, and that the throw-down consisted of entangling Henry in a visible crime, so he would be a regular criminal, and, also, wholly in his tempter's grasp."

"Like as not."

"Boy, did Steve finally kill him?"

"Why should he, if he wanted him in his power?"

"Possibly it was done in the heat of passion."

"True."

"Unfortunate Henry!" murmured Jack, regretfully.

"Wal, his takin' off will relieve Rosalie from a heavy burden in tryin' ter save him."

"It will do more!" cried Jack. "Do you know, I have been wrongfully suspected of the very robbery he committed, and to which I have just referred. It was he who did it, but circumstances seemed to point to me. Colonel Reymore accused me, but refrained from arresting me. Rosalie and I knew who was guilty, but she implored me to wait until she could see him and have matters arranged, if possible. Now, I can clear myself— But of course you know nothing of this."

Billy smiled. His watchful eyes and attentive ears had enabled him to learn more than Jack thought.

He said nothing, however.

Jack was invited to go to their room for a conference. They went, but the situation was changed, when they arrived, by the finding of the following note:

"MISTER WILLYUM WAID:

"If you will cum to my house i wil tel you somethin' w'ich wil help you, an' mebbe keep you owt uv trubble. Cum as sune as you git this. Don't fale."

"Yores respectable,
"PATTY BEEKS."

It would not do to neglect such a call, and Billy went at once. He found Patty considerably excited.

"Ef you don't look out you'll git done up!" she cried.

"Why so, my jewel?"

"Steve Slim has plotted fer to do et, an' he's goin' ter strike soon. He's called a conference o' his gang, an' they mean ter fix you an' the big feller from Maine. They'll do it, too, ef you don't-hustle!"

CHAPTER XVII.

A GAME WHICH FAILED.

"Do us up, eh?" repeated Billy, coolly. "Wal, mebbe Steve kin work that rifle, an' mebbe he can't. But what do you know about their nefarious schemes?"

"Wal," answered Patty, "after you an' Phin had sech a narrer escape from the three men in the suller, they skipped out, as you know, but Sam has been back, an' from talk between him an' another tenant all this leaked out."

"You heerd them, did ye?"

"No; et was Mr. Warriner, the man I told ye of before. Seems he was a soldier in the army, an' under Colonel Reymore. That's how he knew of the Reymores. But he heerd Sam talk, an' he come an' told me."

"What's the plot, my jewel?" inquired Billy, calmly.

"I only know they mean ter nab you an' Phin. How they will do et is ter be settled at a meetin' between Steve, Rollo Dulaney, Sam an' the other two men, this evenin', at Noll Tripp's Cosy Den. D'y'e know the place?"

"I do, Patty, an' you kin rest assured we'll find some way o' puttin' a damper on it all. Patty, you are a diamond o' the first water. I'm much obligeed ter you, an' when I git rich I'll give ye a silk gown."

"Git a hustle on, then, an' rake in yer pile!" advised Patty.

"I'm jest in that line, my jewel, an' you kin expect the gown ez soon ez you see it."

Billy returned to his comrades and made his report. A long conference ensued, and the result was that they went to the police. There they unfolded the full story. Jack had advised Billy and Phin to tell all about their visit to the hotel, just after Happy Harry's murder, and make plain their motive in keeping quiet so long, and this was done. What the police thought, now they had the man and the boy for whom they had searched so diligently, could not be told, for they kept their own counsel, but a general plan was formed to capture Steve, that night, and see what would come of it.

Noll Tripp's place was a saloon with attachments.

One of the attachments consisted of rooms which he let for permanent or transient use, and it was a known resort for thieves. Tripp was supposed to be their good friend; and so he was as far as it was to his interest to be. Really, however, he took great care to keep in with the police, and, when approached by them for help, he always gave his lawless friends away.

Investigation showed that Steerer Steve had engaged a room for the night, and the officers prepared to do their part.

The room mentioned had a transom over the door. An accident had removed all obstruction, and in place thereof was a piece of paper nailed over the aperture and painted so it looked like solid wood-work.

Outside this point the men of the force took their stand.

Steve came in due time, and was joined by Dulaney, a little later.

"Where are the boys?" asked the Steerer.

"Down-stairs," replied Rollo.

"Why didn't you bring them up?"

"I want to talk with you, first."

"About what?"

"Your proposed catch of Phin Pratt and the kid."

"What about it?"

"I am not in favor of it, the more I think of it."

"Why not?"

"It is too dangerous to risk it now."

"Do you remember that Pratt got a thousand dollars of your money?" demanded Steve, warmly. "Do you want him to get away with that?"

"Better that than we should get into worse trouble. Fact is, Steve, this is a time when we should keep quiet. The police are looking all around to learn who killed Harry Barrington. Is it prudent to invite their attention?"

"They have no clew to me."

"All the more reason why you should avoid notice. It is known that you did much to harm Harry and lead him into evil ways. It would take but little for them to suspect that you killed him. That was a big blunder of yours, Steve."

"He only got what he deserved," sullenly replied the Steerer. "He and I rode on a train from New Haven with a man who has proved to be none other than Phin Pratt. I seized my chance and picked Phin's pocket. When we got to the hotel Harry demanded a share of the money. It was my scheme to keep him short of cash, so I refused. We quarreled. I lost my temper and struck Harry. I did not think to kill him until the idea was conceived in passion—I admit that when I did strike, it was with the purpose to kill, though—and it was all his fault. Well, it was I who killed Harry. What of it? What has it to do with our protecting ourselves from Phin and the Bowery kid?"

"Simply this: Situated as we are, we ought to go light for awhile and try to avert suspicion."

"I refuse to consider the plan. I am going to nab Phin and the kid as agreed upon."

"I won't help you!"

"See here, Lane, are you trying to do me dirt? I have never had the utmost faith in you, and now I mistrust you. By the fiends! If you don't come in I'll expose your operations in the bunco line!"

"Will you?" Dulaney retorted. "And I'll report to the police that you killed Harry Barrington!"

"You will? Then I have a good mind to serve you as I did him!"

The speaker's hand sought his pocket, and the policeman thought it time to move, as they did, with a rush. There was a crash of the paper over the transom, and in a moment more Bunco Billy had wiggled through and stood before the astonished crooks!

"Hold yer hosses, gents, an' don't let angry passions rise!" coolly advised Bowery Billy.

"We are in for it!" gasped Dulaney, "we have been listened to!"

Steerer Steve grew white. Then his hand came out of his pocket holding a revolver.

"Seize the kid!" he ordered. "If he resists I'll blow his head off!"

"He has heard us talk of Harry!" muttered Dulaney.

"Seize him, I tell you! We will give the young snake a lesson. Seize him—But, no; you are as weak as a woman. I'll do it, myself!"

Steve advanced upon Billy.

"Keep off!" cried Billy, on the alert.

"You meddling fool! I'll do you up once and for all!"

"Take et cool, Stephen!"

"You have done more to injure me than any man, but I will end that all now."

There was a wicked gleam in his eyes, and the revolver looked ominous. It seemed as if Billy was to pay the penalty of rashness, but he was purposely irritating the Steerer. All the while his hand had been on the key to the door, and he now gave a sudden

turn. The bolt flew back; the door was pushed open, and in marched the officers and Phin Pratt!

"All hands around!" cried the log-driver, cheerfully. "Gents, hev you got any more green goods ter sell? The shoe is on the other foot, now, by gosh! an' I'll bet the best farm in Skowhegan your day is about run, ye pesky imps of Gotham!"

Before the dumfounded crook could recover his nerve, he had been pounced upon by the officers. The game was played to the end.

The next day the city had unexpected news, and it was known that the murderer at the hotel was fully explained. What the public did not then learn came out at the subsequent trial of Steerer Steve. He was convicted on the charge of murdering Harry, and would have been dealt with according to law had not a fever carried him off before the law could operate. Dulaney, Sam and the rest of the gang went to prison.

Jack's innocence being established, he was gladly received back by Colonel Reymore, and as he and Rosalie continue the best of friends, it seems likely the reunion will be permanent.

Patty Beeks and Bowery Billy were remembered with cash rewards and other assistance.

Phin was allowed to keep a part of the thousand dollars he acquired from Dulaney when he beat the crook at his bunco game, and the log-driver went back to Maine happy, if he had not gained any money from English relatives. His farewell to Billy was characteristic:

"Say, I like your style first-rate, an' I hope you'll visit me in Skowhegan. Come down, an', by gosh! you shall hev all the cider an' pun'kin pies you kin stow away—yes, an' see the reddest-cheeked girls there is in the country!"

It was a tempting bait, but, so far, Billy had been too busy to leave his occupation of bouncing bunco men from the Bowery.

THE END.

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